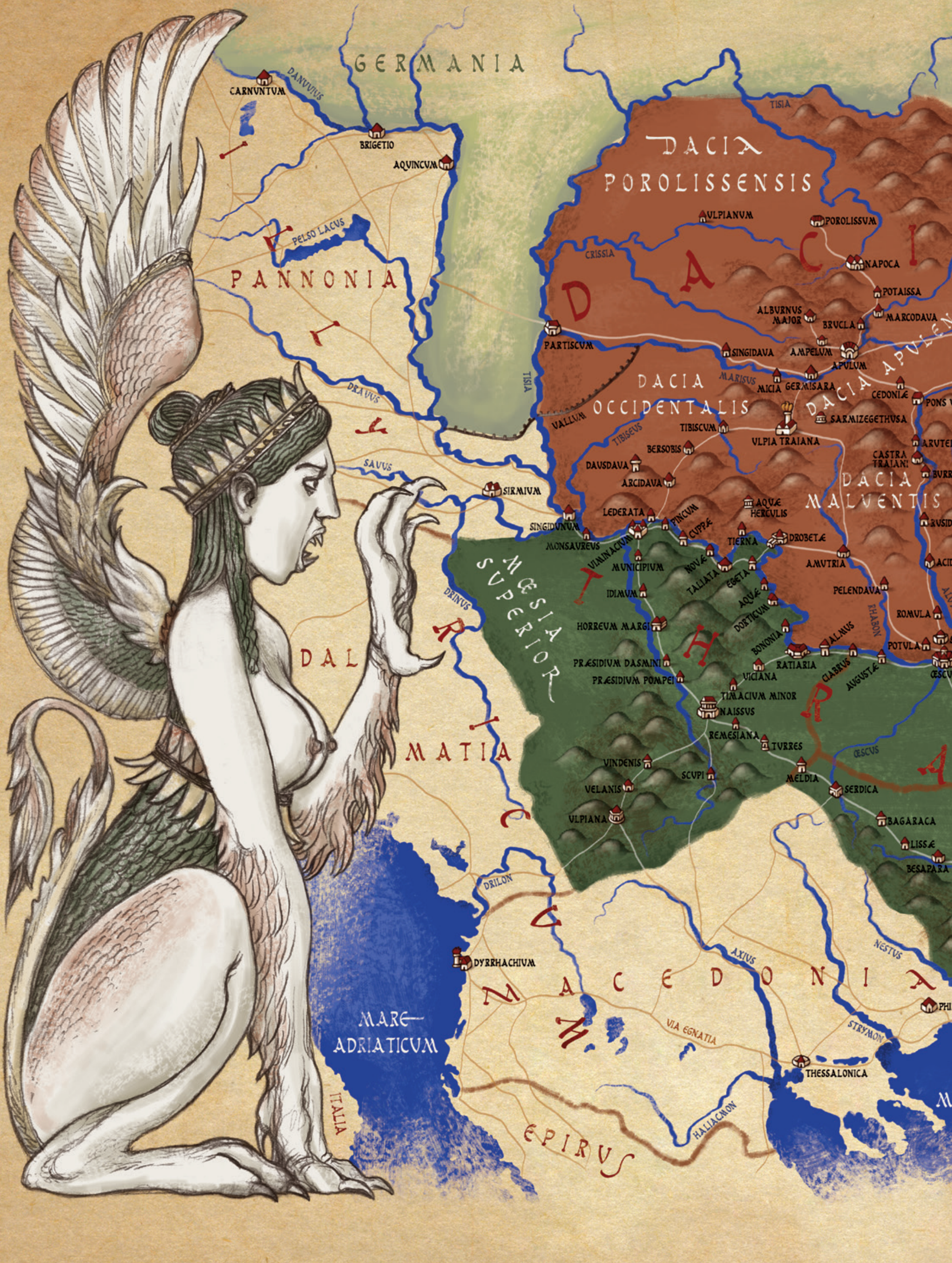
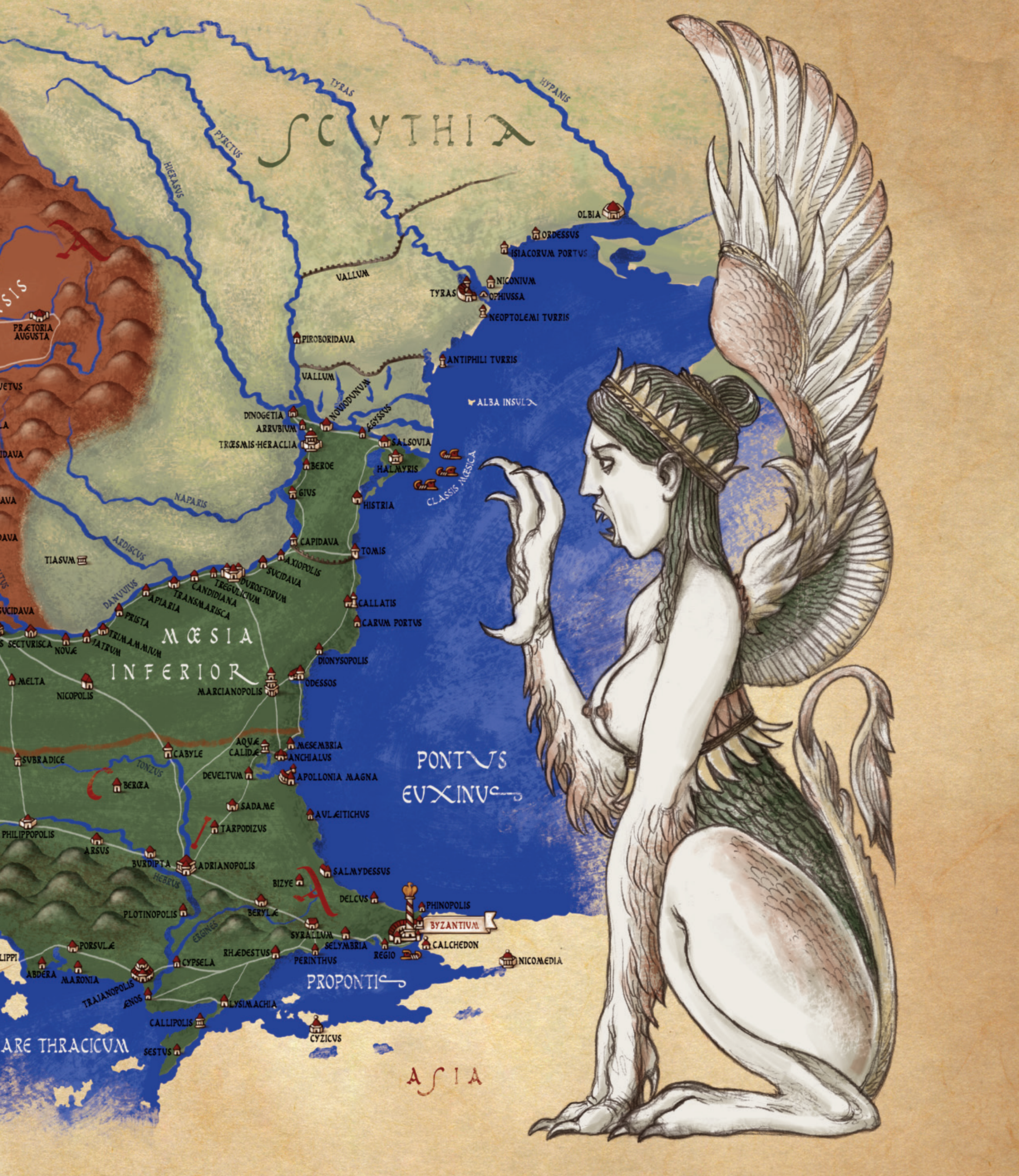
LEX·ARCANA

DACIA AND THRACIA

STORM AT THE EMPIRE'S BORDERS


GERMANIA
CARNUNTUM
DANUVIUS
BRIGETIO
AQUINCUM
PELSO LACUS
PANNONIA
ILLYRICUM
DRAVUS
SAVUS
SIRMIUM
DRINUS
DALMATIA
DRILON
DYRRHACHIUM
MARE ADRIATICUM
ITALIA
EPIRUS
MACEDONIA
VIA EGNATIA
HALIACMON
AXIUS
THESSALONICA
STRYMON
NESTUS
PHI
TISIA
DACIA POROLISSENSIS
DACIA
ULPIANUM
POROLISSUM
CRISSIA
NAPOCA
POTAISSA
ALBURNUS MAJOR
BRUCLA
MARCODAVA
PARTISCUM
SINGIDAVA
AMPELUM
APULUM
DACIA APULENSIS
MARISUS
MICIA
GERMISARA
CEDONIÆ
PONS V
DACIA OCCIDENTALIS
VALLUM
SARMIZEGETHUSA
TIBISCUM
ULPIA TRAIANA
TIBISCUS
ARUTE
CASTRA TRAIANI
BERSOBIS
DAUSDAVA
ARCIDAVA
DACIA MALVENTIS
AQUÆ HERCULIS
LEDERATA
PINCUM
CUPPÆ
SINGIDUNUM
MONSAUREUS
VIMINACIUM
TIERNA
DROBETÆ
MŒSIA SUPERIOR
MUNICIPIUM
NOVÆ
TALIATA
EGETA
AMUTRIA
IDIMUM
AQUÆ
DORTICUM
PELENDAVA
HORREUM MARGI
ROMULA
BONONIA
ALMUS
RABON
POTULA
RATIARIA
PRÆSIDIUM DASMINI
PRÆSIDIUM POMPEI
VICIANA
CIABRUS
AUGUSTÆ
ŒSCU
TIMACIUM MINOR
NAISSUS
THRACIA
REMESIANA
TURRES
ŒSCUS
VINDENIS
SCUPI
MELDIA
SERDICA
VELANIS
ULPIANA
BAGARACA
LISSÆ
BESAPARA


HYPANIS
TYRAS
SCYTHIA
PYRETUS
HIERASUS
OLBIA
ORDESSUS
ISIACORUM PORTUS
VALLUM
NICONIUM
TYRAS
OPHIUSSA
NEOPTOLEMI TURRIS
SIS
PRÆTORIA AUGUSTA
PIROBORIDAVA
ANTIPHILI TURRIS
VETUS
VALLUM
NOVIODUNUM
ALBA INSULA
DINOGETIA
ARRUBIUM
ÆGYSSUS
SALSOVIA
TRŒSMIS-HERACLIA
HALMYRIS
BEROE
CLASSIS MŒSICA
NAPARIS
GIUS
HISTRIA
ARDISCUS
CAPIDAVA
TOMIS
TIASUM
AXIOPOLIS
SUCIDAVA
DUROSTORUM
TEGULICIUM
CANDIDIANA
TRANSMARISCA
DANUVIUS
APIARIA
PRISTA
CALLATIS
CARUM PORTUS
SUCIDAVA
SECTURISCA
NOVÆ
IATRUM
TRIMAMMIUM
MŒSIA INFERIOR
DIONYSOPOLIS
MELTA
NICOPOLIS
MARCIANOPOLIS
ODESSOS
AQUÆ CALIDÆ
MESEMBRIA
ANCHIALUS
SUBRADICE
CABYLE
TONZUS
DEVELTUM
APOLLONIA MAGNA
PONTUS EUXINUS
BERŒA
SADAME
AULÆITICHUS
TARPODIZUS
PHILIPPOPOLIS
ARSUS
BURDIPTA
ADRIANOPOLIS
HEBRUS
SALMYDESSUS
BIZYE
DELCUS
PHINOPOLIS
PLOTINOPOLIS
BERYLÆ
BYZANTIUM
ERGINES
SYRALLUM
SELYMBRIA
CALCHEDON
PORSULÆ
RHÆDESTUS
REGIO
NICOMEDIA
LIPPI
ABDERA
MARONIA
CYPSELA
PERINTHUS
TRAJANOPOLIS
ÆNOS
PROPONTIS
LYSIMACHIA
CALLIPOLIS
CYZICUS
ARE THRACICUM
SESTUS
ASIA

LEX·ARCANA

DACIA AND THRACIA

STORM AT THE EMPIRE'S BORDERS

LEX · ARCANA
AN EMPIRE WITHOUT END

DACIA AND THRACIA – STORM AT THE EMPIRE'S BORDERS is a volume by
Mauro Longo
The adventures THE EMPIRE OF BLOOD, UNDER A BANNER OF GOLD and ONCE UPON A TIME IN BYZANTIUM by
Mauro Longo
Additional support, develop and 2nd edition rules compliance: Michele Garbuggio, Claudio Vergati and Luca Scoz

LEX ARCANA® is a game by
Leo Colovini, Dario De Toffoli, Marco Maggi and Francesco Nepitello

Corebook Design and Development, second edition: Marco Maggi and Francesco Nepitello
with advice of Leo Colovini
Additional design and supervision: Michele Garbuggio
Historical consultant: Francesca Garello
Creative Director: Andrea Angiolino
Project Manager: Valerio Ferzi

DACIA AND THRACIA ARTWORK
Cover Artist: Antonio De Luca
Main Artist: Angelica Donarini
Cartographer: Francesco Mattioli
Other illustrations: Giorgio Donato, Fabio Porfidia, Andrea Piparo, Francesco Mattioli, Angelica Donarini
Layout: Matteo Benedetti

Special thanks to our KS and BK Campaign Backers!
Join the Cohors Auxiliaria Arcana at the following FB group: www.facebook.com/groups/LexArcanaFan

ENGLISH EDITION
Supervision: Valerio Ferzi
Traslation: Federico Gavioli
Editor and Proofreader: Kevin Chapman, Francesca Garello
Mistype Hunters: Kevin Chapman, Claudio Vergati, Masa Facchini

© 2021 Quality Games S.r.l. - Italy
LEX ARCANA® is a trademark by Quality Games S.r.l. in U.S.A. and other Countries
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
Lex Arcana© 1994 Leo Colovini, Dario De Toffoli, Marco Maggi e Francesco Nepitello

INDEX

Introduction ... 6
How to Use this Book ... 6
Storm at the Empire's Borders ... 7

PART I
REPORT ON THE PROVINCE OF DACIA

General Information ... 10
Geography of Dacia ... 11
Box - Reaching and Roaming Dacia ... *12*
From the Depths of Primordial Forests ... 13
The Dark Terrors of the Night ... 13
A Warrior Culture ... 14
Dacians, Getae, Magyars, and Scythians ... 14
Ancestral Ruins and the Secrets of the World ... 15
The Shadow Beneath the Forest ... 16
Box - The Heart of Zalmoxis ... *16*
The Gods of the Mountains ... 17
The Conquest ... 17
Under Imperial Rule ... 18
Box - The Traianus Column ... *19*
Box - History and Geography ... *20*
Dacia - 1232 AUC ... 20
Box - The Governor of Dacia ... *20*
Dacia from a Crow's Eye ... 21
The Frozen North ... 21
Porolissum, the Northern Headquarters ... 22
Napoca, Within the Grasp of Zerco ... 22
Box - The Dwarf of Napoca ... *23*
Potaissa and the Salt Mines ... 23
The Line of the Northern Fortresses ... 24
The Frozen North - Encounters Table ... *24*
Along the Western Front ... 26
Partiscum, Nothing New on the Western Front ... 26
Arcidava, The Gates on the Danuvium ... 26
Aquae Herculis, The Shrine of the Veterans ... 27
Tibiscum, The Castra Between the Mists ... 27
Box - The Shrine to Hercules ... *27*
Micia, In the Shadow of the Rookery ... 28
Berzobis, The Outpost in the Lands of the Wolf ... 28
Dausdava, The City of Wolves ... 28
Along the Western Front - Encounters Table ... *29*
The Heart of Dacia ... 31
Ulpia Traiana, Capital of Dacia ... 31
The Heart of Dacia - Encounters Table ... *32*
Apulum, The City of Gold ... 34
Alburnus Maior, The Golden Fortress ... 34
Sarmizegethusa ... 35
Box - Eceditus and the Exercitus Mortuorum ... *35*
The Graveyard of the Ancients ... 36
Old Dacia ... 36
Romula, The Quarters of the First Legion ... 36
Drobeta, The Door of Dacia ... 36
Box - Among the Ranks of the First Legion ... *37*
Sucidava and the Fortresses on the Alutus River ... 37
Old Dacia - Encounters Table ... *38*

PART II
REPORT ON THE PROVINCE OF THRACIA

General Information ... 42
Geography of Thracia ... 43
Box - Reaching and Roaming Thracia ... *43*
The Blood of Titans and the Foundation of the World ... 44
Tyras and the City of the Serpent ... 44
Box - The Titan Ruins ... *44*
The Secret of Steel ... 45
War Among Heroes ... 45
The Land of a Hundred Tribes ... 46
Winds of Conquest ... 47
The Birth of Byzantium ... 48
The Gothic Wars ... 48
The Scourge of the Gods ... 48
A Clash of Civilizations ... 49
Box - The Dominicanae ... *49*
The Ride of the Nightmares ... 50
Thracia - 1232 AUC ... 50
Box - History and Geography ... *50*
Thracia at a Wolf's Pace ... 51
Moesia Inferior, a Warring Region ... 51
Box - The Prefectus of Asia ... *51*
Oescus, The Crossroads of the North ... 52
Novae, The Most Tested Bastion ... 52
Durostorum, Between the Goths and Rome ... 53
Heraclia, The Last Outpost ... 53
Box - The Horses of Thracia ... *53*
Histria, The Ruins on the Black Sea ... 54
Tomis, The City of the Bloodthirsty Queen ... 54
Box - The Troglodytes of Moesia ... *54*
Nicopolis, The Horrid Face of War ... 55
The Cities of Gold ... 55
A Warring Region - Encounters Table ... *56*
Thracia, A Land of Light and Shadows ... 58
Apollonia Magna, The Sun Harbor ... 58
Salmydessus, Mother of Ships ... 58
Box - The Secrets of Apollonia ... *59*
Box - The Sons of Caligula and Salmydessus ... *59*
Adrianopolis, Among the Forge Masters ... 60
Philippopolis, "The Fairest of All Cities" ... 60
Byzantium, The Second Rome ... 60
Box - To Live and Let Die in Byzantium ... *60*
The Eastern Capital, Between Past and Present ... 61
The Shape of the City ... 62
The Hippodrome and the Five Factions ... 63
Byzantium - Encounters Table ... *64*
Moesia Superior, The Mountains of the Great Gods ... 65
Singidunum, On the Borders Between Three Provinces ... 66

- *Box - Encounters and Complications in Thracia and Moesia Superior 66*
- Viminacium, The City of Gladiators 67
  - *Box - The Gladiators of Viminacium 67*
- Ratiaria, The Patrician City 68
- Naissus, The City of Nymphs 68
  - *Box - Seramis 68*
- Viciana, The City of Horses 69

PART III
BEYOND THE BORDERS OF THE EMPIRE

- **General Information** 72
- **In the Shadow of the Borders** 73
  - The Kingdom of the Vandals 73
    - *Box - The Vandal King 73*
  - The Secrets of the Pontus Euxinus 74
    - *Box - The Scepter of Atlas and the Mysteries of the Sunken Cities 74*
    - *Along the Shores of the Pontus Euxinus - Encounters Table 75*
  - The Island of Snakes 76
  - The Ruins of Ophiussa 76
  - Cimmeria! 77
    - *Box - Adventures in Ophiussa 77*
  - Olbia, The Stolen City 78
  - Tauris, The Prison of Giants 78
  - Of Maeotia: The Horrid People 78
  - The Goths and the Shadow of Vassago 79
  - Lost Colchis 79
    - *Box - The Maeotians 79*
    - *Box - The King of the Goths 79*
  - The Sign of Prometheus 80
  - The Pastures of the Horde 80
  - The Great Forest of the World 81
  - The Daughters of Echidna 82
    - *Steppes and Remote Forests of Scythia - Encounters Table 82*

PART IV
TERROR ON THE BORDER

- The Shadow Empire 86
- From the Furthest Reaches 87
- The Great Gods of Thracia and Samothrace 87
- The Schola Nigra and the Cult of Zalmoxis 87
- The Parade of Orpheus 88
- Demonology 88
  - *Box - Aoide and Scholomancy 88*
- The Eternal God of the Heavens and the Order of Abaris 89
- The Kabeiroi and Adamans 90
- The Red Wolves 90
- The Huns and the Horde of Nightmares 90
  - *Box - The Sword of War 90*
- The Sons of Caligula 91
  - *Box - The Son of Attila 91*
- The Court of King Deceditus 92
- The Blood Gods and their Spawn 93
- The Carpathian Vampires 94
- Obscure Bloodlines 94
- The War of the Five Empires and the Rise of the Black Caesar 95

PART V
NEW RULES

- **New Equipment** 98
- **New Weapons** 98
- **New Weapon Features** 98
- **New Armor** 98
  - Adamans Equipment 99
- **Dual Wielding** 99
- **New Magical Disciplines and Specialties** 100
  - New Rituals of Aoide 100
  - Other New Rituals 101
    - *Box - A Song for the Heroes 103*
- **New Indigitamenta** 104
- **New Indigitamenta of the Di Indigetes** 105
- **New Specialties** 105

PART VI
NEW MONSTERS AND NPCS

- New Special Abilities 108
- New Magic Powers 108
- New NPCs 108
  - Barbarian NPCs 108
  - Gladiator NPCs 110
- Animals 111
- Fantastical Creatures 112
  - Monstrous Animals 113
  - Sacred Animals 114
  - Demons 116
  - Dragons 118
  - Undead 121
    - *Box - The Hosts of the Dead of Deceditus 121*
  - The Vampires of Dacia and Thracia 122

PART VII
ADVENTURES

- **The Empire of Blood** 126
  - Part 1 Transylvania 128
  - Part 2 Vampire Hunters 130
  - Part 3 The Wrath of the Blood Gods 132
  - Conclusion 133
- **Under a Banner of Gold** 134
  - Part 1 Tomb Robbers 135
  - Part 2 Murky Waters 137
  - Part 3 The Sepulcher of the Lord of the Horde 140
  - Part 4 The Valley of Death 141
  - Conclusion 143
- **Once Upon a Time in Byzantium** 146
  - Part 1 Prophecies and Mysteries 147
  - Part 2 Faustus and Furius 149
  - Part 3 The Lady of Snakes 152
  - Conclusion 153

INTRODUCTION

D*acia and Thracia - Storm at the Empire's Borders* is a *Lex Arcana, Second Edition* geographic module about two of the darkest provinces of the Danubian limes, and about the mysterious regions beyond: plains roamed by proud and indomitable hordes, wild and boundless forests, and cemeteries hiding terrible blood secrets.

Here, the Roman conquest has brought a faint light to a dark and tumultuous world, trappings of civilization to tame a bloodthirsty and stubborn beast.

War and invading barbarians are still a solid reality, an aspect of everyday life never as present in the rest of the Empire as it is here. Citizens, foederati, and servants live in the shadows of mighty fortifications, echoing with the clashing of steel and glimmering with the faint light of torches that barely keep at bay the dark of the night and the monsters hiding within.

This volume is divided into three main sections, each of which is then split into chapters about specific topics.

The first section, *Parts I-IV*, contains lore about the provinces of Dacia, Thracia, and the wild lands of Scythia that extend beyond the Danubian limes to the north and east. These lands extend from Sarmizegethusa to Byzantium, from the shores of the Danuvium to the Pontus Euxinus, and from the fortresses surrounding the Empire to the boundless lands that once belonged to the Cimmerians. These latter lands are now roamed by the Vandals, the Goths, and the Huns, who are some of the greatest threats to the survival of Rome.

The first chapters cover geographical and historical elements of those regions, the social characteristics of their inhabitants, their secrets, potential encounters the group might face there, and a selection of their most interesting rites, traditions, and customs.

The second section, *Parts V* and *VI*, contains additional rules and options for the Custodes: new equipment, new rituals and Indigitamenta to learn, and new enemies and monsters to fight.

The third section is dedicated to three adventures set in Dacia, Thracia, and the mysterious lands beyond the border. These special missions pit the Custodes against the terrors of Transylvania and Carpathia, the dangers of the north eastern front and the Black Sea coast, and the dark deities of death and blood that hide in those regions.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The geographic module of Dacia and Thracia is a game compendium for *Lex Arcana* dedicated to the two provinces that make up the northeastern border of the Roman Empire, facing continental Europe and the endless reaches of western Asia. Although mostly meant for the Demiurge, players interpreting Custodes from these regions who wish for more information on the homeland of their characters can find here anything they need.

This book, then, contains information, hooks, and options specifically for Dacia and Thracia, to be used alongside the adventures presented in the last section of the volume or in support of original scenarios.

The new content is presented as a report by Magister of the Cohors Arcana Flavius Artemius Longinus to the Emperor, as the various magistri routinely send in such reports about their regions of competence to inform the decision-making process or the deployment of Custodes. This approach grants, on one side, a general picture of the two provinces, their threats, and their distinctive traits. On the other, it presents every piece of information as subjective, partial, or potentially inaccurate, allowing the Demiurge to enrich or even contradict the official data in the next chapters. The very Custodes, during their travels, might discover new, different information on the dangers, deities and monsters, or other elements that could drastically change what the magister reported.

The internal report makes up the first section of the book and is divided into parts called "papyri".

The first three, each about specific regions or cities, make up the geographic segment proper, with new adventure scenarios, hooks, and ideas.

In the fourth part, the report of the magister touches on the customs of the local populations and a few particular traditions from Dacia, Thracia, and the bordering regions, helpful in enriching the world with color and depth as the Custodes travel in these lands. These regions have been vexed for millennia by primordial Blood Gods, ancestral monsters, and their cursed kin, elements explained here in detail. The last chapter of the first section describes disconcerting beliefs and rumors from these provinces and gives a general overview on the main threats hiding there, for the locals, the Empire, and the world.

The first four parts feature descriptions of the main characters of the region and tables with sample encounters as well as adventurous situations, to better use the information in the book and offer a more satisfying experience.

The contents of the second section of the book, once the report is over, are meant for the Demiurge only: new weapons, rituals and Indigitamenta, new creatures to face, and dark adversaries fill the pages of *Parts V* and *VI*. It is here that many of the mysteries, horrors, and the strangest beings mentioned in the previous sections take shape and are defined with the numbers and special traits the Demiurge needs to face the Custodes with worthy opponents.
The chapters of this section contain all the rules both the Cohors Auxiliaria Arcana might need in the execution of their duty in such a strategically important region of the Empire and from which the Demiurge can draw for inspiration for their adventures.

At the end of this book are presented three adventures: *The Empire of Blood, Under the Banner of Gold*, and *Once Upon a Time in Byzantium*. These adventures are independent from one another and can be played in any order, though the first is a powerful introduction to the grim terrors of Dacia and the second fits a group that has already seen it all and is ready for something unusual.

STORM AT THE EMPIRE'S BORDERS

The subheading of this module is indicative of what extraordinary adventures are waiting for the Custodes at the edges of the primordial forests of the world, along the borders with the eastern steppe, and at the feet of dark and towering mountain ranges. This region is made for gothic, nighttime, and terrifying adventures, hunting or being hunted by bloodthirsty monsters, facing the most savage and fearsome of barbarous warriors, or exploring the ancient tombs of forgotten people looking for gold and primordial heirlooms.
The Empire of Rome is the most powerful of the known world. This is beyond question, but around, close by, and below there are others, dark and insidious: the Shadow Empire that extends among the subterranean reaches of Erebus, that of the Black Caesar venerated by the Lords of the Horde, and the Empire of Blood of ancestral gods of slaughter older than the Olympians themselves.

The legions of Rome are the strongest army in the known world. This, too, is beyond question, but even the thousands of legionaries, engineers, praetorians, and foederati could not last long against all the enemies the ancient forests and rolling plains of the world keep sending against them. There are many dire and sinister threats rallying to strike the northeastern borders of the Empire: tall and gelid mountains hiding the secrets of the lost Titans, cold forgotten forges in the heart of the earth, lairs of sorcerer kings capable of manipulating shadows and magic, warlords at the head of hosts thirsting for blood, barrows brimming with gold watched by cold and diaphanous wardens, primordial blood demons controlling the world from their sarcophagi, barbarian tribes on the brink of rebellion, shamans, Scholomancers, and stormcallers ready to channel the forces of nature and those of the realms below against the lands of men, unnatural beasts and ferocious demons that hide deep in the heart of dark and wild reaches, forbidden cults and unholy bloodlines, and entire armies ready to ride against Rome.

It is on this feeble line barely marked on the map that is about to fall a terrifying storm of steel and darkness. However, it is here the Custodes can gain incredible information on the fate of the world, find glory and wealth beyond limit, and discover mystical secrets and powerful rituals not even dreamed of before...

For the glory of Rome and of our eternal Empire, are you ready to reach the ends of the known world, face the storm that is about to strike, and explore the lands beyond?

PART I

REPORT ON THE PROVINCE OF DACIA

GENERAL INFORMATION

from the confidential report of Flavius Artemius Longinus, Magister of the Cohors Auxiliaria Arcana
for the Provinces of Dacia and Thracia,
to the Emperor
Anno ab Urbe Condita MCCXXXII

Flavius Artemius Longinus
Domino Nostro Imperatori Lucio Severo Theodomiro Augusto
salutem dicit

Among the dissolution that accompanies the winter of Ulpia Traiana, a foreign prince happened to appear at numerous parties held by local patricians and quickly became more famous for a series of quirks than for his rank. This Dacian, Gothic, or Scythian dignitary kept an attentive eye on the merriment around him, as if unable to take part in it. Whenever the joyful laughter of a maiden caught his attention, he froze her with but a gaze, striking fear in those festive souls.

Those who felt such fright could not explain it. Some said it was his gray eyes that at first seemed to see through a face and into the depths of the soul behind, then fell like lead, oppressive to the point of being immobilizing. Because of these quirks, he was invited into all the most important domus, and all wished to see him. The bored thrill-seekers were glad to be in the presence of something capable of catching their attention. In spite of his deathly pallor, which did not warm either for modesty or for passion, his appearance and profile were handsome, and many were the matrons who sought to capture the attention of such a notoriously cold man and receive even the faintest signs of affection.

After a season of such appearances at feasts, theater, and public events, all after the sun had set, this strange foreign noble disappeared, and nobody ever heard of him afterwards. Including his name and credentials or the servants and clientes who accompanied him, similar in gaze and origins, would be pointless, as they cannot be traced anymore, nor is it possible to deduce anything other than the worst conjecture. When the Vigiles, investigating mysterious disappearances during the winter, visited the house he had rented for the season, we discovered that his secret was of the direst nature.

Below the mansion, in a network of crypts and basements more akin to a slaughterhouse and a landfill than common storage, were found the defiled and mutilated bodies of almost a hundred victims, those who had disappeared during that winter and many other foreigners whose murders had gone unnoticed.

And so it was that the Cohors Auxiliaria Arcana stationed in Dacia made its first acquaintance with the vampire kin of these lands, a mutual acknowledgment that for a while now has defined our secret war against the Blood Gods and their servants.

The notes and information in this report gather and sum numerous reports and communications from the auxiliaries and the veterans of the Cohors in the last months, about these beings as well as many other dangers and sinister threats of this region, including rumors, missives, and confessions gathered in years past and a general historical and geographical overview of Dacia.

I do not need to recommend caution and discretion in guarding such material, so dangerous to the stability of the Empire not only for the facts themselves but also the grim and frightening truths these events entail. There is another world below the one we know, hidden beneath the facade and the weak veil of Roman civilization, barely conceivable without being wracked with horror and madness. There is another world below ours, as I said, and it is a world of darkness.

You will note that parts of these confidential documents and papyri refer to events and circumstances as rumors, legends, ancient myths, and fragments of news. Unfortunately, this is the general condition of the information in our possession. They seem exaggerated and unlikely at times, while at others so cryptic and enigmatic to be useless. And yet, no word is wasted, no conjecture added without reason, and no version of anything you will find here is reported without some sort of merit. Whatever factual truths hide behind these mysteries and clues, I am afraid, we will discover soon enough.

As I said elsewhere, storm clouds are gathering in the skies of our northeastern border, and chaos will soon strike at our bastions. Then, we shall tell fact from fiction of what is reported here!

As always, the Custodes sent into these regions to unravel their mysteries and schemes will provide future material to shed light or define this news with more precision.

GEOGRAPHY OF DACIA

The noble and vexed province of Dacia is the only one in the Empire wholly north of the Danuvium, and it acts as the frontier of the civilized world with the endless lands beyond the border. That is, the "Mare Barbaricum", the ancient and never charted forest of the world, which extends to the Germania Magna, to the realms of the Hyperboreans, and to the lands of the Scythians and the unknown regions further, where they say live snow lions, dragons, and man-eating giants.

For this one reason above all, Dacia, as tumultuous and threatened from within its own borders as it is, is the shield of the Empire from the dangers beyond the limes. Unlike Thracia, its northern-most areas especially, Dacia boasts strong natural bulwarks such as steep mountains, thick and intricate forests, ridges, canyons, and valleys that prevent or severely hamper the incursions of horse-borne armies.

Numerous legions, auxiliary cohorts, foederati, and other militias of strategic relevance are stationed here, not the least of which are the tens of members of the Cohors Auxiliaria Arcana that have their quarters in the capital Ulpia Traiana. Such a combination of natural defenses and military presence ensures that on this province does not loom the threat that troubles neighboring regions, even though it is to the north of Thracia, between the lower course of the Danuvium and the Pontus Euxinus. Vandal warbands and Gothic tribes have raided these lands multiple times. The Hun threat, however, is remote, as Attila's horse hordes cannot swarm there as easily as in Moesia.

Ulpia Traiana is surely the most important settlement of the province, a city of administration, politics, and trade which coordinates local security and the Golden Square, the real reason behind our presence in such brutal regions. The city is inhabited by a few tens of thousands of Roman citizens, the families and clienteles of the province administrators, a few landowners, and hundreds of artisans and traders whose ancestors came here from other Danubian lands. A limited number of ranking citizens with the thankless task of keeping the Dacians in check, subjugated but never conquered, only a fraction of whom are willing to recognize the benefits of Roman conquest.

More than three centuries have passed since the conquest of these regions by the Divus Traianus, and today Dacia presents the same marks of the greatness of Rome as many other provinces: roads, fortifications, castra and aqueducts, post stations, villas, and cities. And yet, not all see it this way, as Roman rule is felt by many as a yoke to be rid of. The ancient Dacian aristocracy was decapitated centuries ago, during the times of Decebalus, and yet new generations of princes and nobles have made a return, boasting dynastic claims so far kept hidden to destabilize our rule. Bandits, rebellious Dacian traditionalists, and the secret cult of Zalmoxis, are from this point of view, only the most visible and superficial effect of what is conspired in the shadows, a secret and ramified intrigue that spans every corner of the region and yet thankfully does not seem ready to subvert our domain.

There are four main regions in this province:

- **Dacia Porolissensis** is the northern-most and the one bordering Germania Magna. The local limes keep the Vandals, the Herules, and the other people gathering under the banners of Odoacer in check from the direction of Borea. Its main settlements are the stronghold of Porolissum, hence the name, the castrum of Potaissa, and the city of Napoca. This is the most militarized region of the province, and every facet of its administration dedicated to the sacred defense of its borders. The northern reaches of the Golden Square are within this region, and the protection of such a valuable resource is the second strategic objective for our military presence.
- **Western Dacia** is defined by the flow of the rivers Marisus to the north, Tisia to the west, and Danuvium to the south. The frontier fortress of Partiscum and the settlements of Arcidava, Tibiscum, and Bersobis are the worthiest of note, while a short distance away, just beyond the course of the great southern river, is Viminacium, key city of Moesia Superior. This land is not directly under the threat of war, but over its northwestern border are the lands occupied by those who call themselves "Free Daci", incapable of mustering an invading army but well used to raiding and sacking our borders.
- **Dacia Apulensis** is the heart of the province and includes the capital, Ulpia Traiana, the center of Apulum, the Golden City, second metropolis of the province, and Ampelum, the golden fortress. Although it is the wealthiest and most civilized part of the province, its inhabitants are well aware that their present prosperity depends upon the fortresses beyond the mountains around them.
- Lastly, **Dacia Malventis**, defends the eastern borders from the Goths, the Huns, and the hundred peoples that owe fealty to them. It faces the southern, more peaceful and secure, Moesia Inferior, from which it is separated by the course of the Danuvium.

Each of these regions is assigned a paragraph in this first scroll, so you should read those sections further below for more specific information. Before delving into details, however, let me provide a general overview of the most important facts about the entire province.

The first thing my pen wishes to write is that the nature of this country is harsh and dreadful for those like me, born on the gentle shores of the Mare Internum. If summers are relatively temperate and bearable, the winter months are cold and harsh, the higher and exposed lands continuously under attack from snow and ice. Even in the more sheltered areas, the winds are ferocious and laden with snow.

The nights of the cold months are long and dark, deadly for those out in the frost, as even the flame of the hearth and the waters in the calidarium barely stave off frostbite and numbness. Equally, autumn and spring are plagued by torrential rains, thunderstorms, and formidable and sudden downpours. Those are also the seasons in which, respectively due to rain and the thawing of the glaciers, the rivers overflow into the valleys, cliffs slide, fords disappear, wooden bridges are wrenched off of their posts, and the roads turn into muddy trails. Swamps and mires of the region, already abundant in summer, expand considerably during these months, often quadrupling in size and flooding fields and roads. The gods preserve those who travel far from the main roads or in months other than summer!

Although this land was annexed and pacified centuries ago, Dacia still looks to this day like a country of conquest and colonization, its management complex and problematic due both to the inner malcontent and to the open front to the northeast of the continent. To these mundane problems add the terrors of the night and the dark dangers of the woods, peaks, and sepulchers, so widespread that there is not one region without at least one of these unnatural perils. This land is the place of choice not just of the Nosphorati, the "Bearers of Pestilence" in the dialect of Gades in Iberia where they have been sighted, also named Blood Gods, but also of their servants and spawn, terrible creatures capable of shifting their skin into that of wolves, as well as sorcerers and worshipers of dark gods, and specters so numerous they gather in monstrous and bloodthirsty legions. Everyday life of almost all is, therefore, a nightmare. These dark omens represent the most terrifying and feared threats of the region, well beyond those posed by Vandals and Goths.

The undeniable truth in this report, well known to Romans and Dacians, is the following: were it not for the wealth in gold of the Western Mountains, the Empire would have consolidated much more easily on the right bank of the Danuvium, without the need to cross this magnificent river and occupy such a sinister and dangerous province.

More than three centuries have passed since Traianus's conquest and the subsequent waves of consolidation, so the colonization of the province is a fact. Traveling the country far and wide, milites and traders have been walking the roads of Rome for generations. They find shelter in the walls and the fortifications of Rome, they drink from the fountains of Rome, they meet in the fora of Rome, and they trade in coins minted by Rome, haggling in the language of our forefathers. Oh, how far east has gone Rome!

These barbarous and savage lands, now partially subdued, look to the eyes of poets and scholars like what the world must have been before the advent of man or during the golden age: plateaus, forests, and mountains never tread upon by human foot, home of spirits and beasts, range endlessly under wild heavens that few have ever investigated.

REACHING AND ROAMING DACIA

Instead of being its frontier, the Danuvium today is the main artery of the country, both for those who cross it from one side to the other, coming and going from Illyricum and Macedonia, to the west of the river, and for those sailing up and down, from the Black Sea to the Resia, through Pannonia. From the Danuvium and the other main rivers in the province, almost all navigable and well-traveled, split the roads that run alongside them or connect together the main settlements, the outposts, the furthest segments of the limes, and the mines of the Golden Square.

The Custodes sent into Dacia probably leave from a harbor in the Mare Internum to sail to Byzantium through the Hellespont, and from there to the mouth of the Danuvium. Then, they either sail along the river, or reach its alto corso to then sail down to the southern border of the region.

For those who prefer moving on land and are already on the northern shores of the Adriaticum, from Aquileia and Salona begin the inland roads that reach the region from the south. Among the numerous magnificent works our engineers have built here, the Drobetae Bridge surely stands out, the longest of the known world ever laid upon a river. This monument to Roman ingenuity and willpower was commissioned to Apollodorus of Damascus by Traianus and connects Dacia, Macedonia, and Illyricum with wide roads in addition to being garrisoned by large forces on both ends. This is the safest way to move between the Danubian provinces, reaching as far as north as Ulpia Traiana and Apulum.

Other bridges, less imposing but of equal importance, cross the Danuvium at Sucidava, joining Dacia and Thracia together. The roads crossing these structures run along the eastern-most lands, before bending again towards the capital from the southeast.

The majority of the other important roads in the province, especially those of Porolissensis and of the territory around the Golden Square, are used by the military to connect the border fortresses and the inner ones, all regularly watched and patrolled. Here, tolls and searches of travelers are a constant, and there is a florid market of diplomatic letters and passes that could expedite some of those controls. The most important cargoes usually leave the Golden Fortress and reach Apulum via land, escorted by entire Cohorts, then passing through Ulpia Traiana, touch Tibiscum and carry on to the Danuvium.

Beyond the network of small and large roads garrisoned by our legionaries, Dacia is a thick and dangerous forest, mostly unknown to us and laden with enemies and perils, into which even the best armed and largest of forces hesitate to plunge.

FROM THE DEPTHS OF PRIMORDIAL FORESTS

Not much is known of the first Getae and the ancient Dacians, the populations living in these lands in the most ancient of pasts, earlier even than the history the scholars study. According to wise ones and their traditions, the Dacians were already wandering these lands, as well as the Cimmerians and the ancestors of the Thracians in the amorphous passing of the centuries before the foundation of Rome and the Trojan War, when the world was covered in nameless and endless forests.

They are believed to have been a warrior culture back then and formidable warriors, emerging from the sands of time and banding together in the name of their ancestors under their *Draci*, standards with the body of a dragon and the head of a wolf which our armies have appropriated from them and now use to adorn our own banners.

These original warbands would then be divided into ancestral familial formations and warrior covens under the various Draci of the different tribes of the time, to the point where it seems that their very name comes from these same beast-shaped wind-sleeves of which they are so proud. In that late golden age, when their world was one continuous forest, they lived as nomads, building shelter in the ground and lining it with packed earth, to protect them from the rigors of winter, enemies, and encroaching beasts.

Their legends of that primordial time already mentioned the Balauri, colossal beasts with the head of a wolf on a serpentine body which their own Draci were fashioned after, monsters of the woods and the swamps that were the main enemy of their people, perhaps rivaled only by the ancient Blood Gods that seem to have tormented their existence even then.

Another monstrous kin that plagued the primordial inhabitants of the region was that of the Daigerna ("wolf skins"), bestial creatures with the traits of wolf and man, as strong as mighty warriors and ferocious like beasts, similar to the Versipellis of the western tradition. The relationship between the Dacians and the Daigerna, the Balauri, and the Nosphorati was, according to their darkest superstitions, nuanced. Some of these beings were ruthless killers, others were invoked for protection, and it is even said that these monsters led their very armies against their enemies. Whatever truth there is of those forgotten days, today we have only fragmented tales left, handed down through hundreds of generations, bereft of any element that could help in telling fact from fiction.

There is little else historians and scholars are able to report about the origins of the Dacians. As I said earlier, they lived in well-defended familial shelters, dug into the earth or in caverns, they built burial grounds and complex dungeons almost entirely forgotten today, and they used a writing based on hieratic pictograms with a mystical meaning, of which knowledge is now the purview of only a few scholars. They also practiced divination, a secret art different than our own tradition, from Scholomancy to barbarous demonology, although today those doctrines, too, have almost been entirely forgotten and lost.

THE DARK TERRORS OF THE NIGHT

It would be after the predations of monsters and primordial enemies that these people of the earth addressed their prayers to the most mystical and hidden of the gods: Zalmoxis the Black, both God of the Heavens and of Hell, of the Earth and of Mysteries.

This forsaken and unknown deity, elsewhere known as Sabazios and often confused with Dionysus by the Thracians, is a great mystery for our augurs and scholars, too. It is said he was worshiped with orgiastic and violent rituals, that he gave life and death to the Dacians, and that sometimes he manifested in the guise of an enormous snake or a Balaurus with the torso and the head of a god, similar to what is said about Typhoon. And the sacred myths report so many more obscure and conflicting details!

Legends, however, agree on one thing: the conversion of all Dacians to this god happened during the times of our ancient Kingdom. Vexed and tormented by the Blood Gods and all sorts of unnatural horror, plagued by hunger, cold, wars, and illness, the Dacians turned to Zalmoxis for his ferocious protection and deliverance from certain doom, and Zalmoxis gave them weapons and amulets with which to defend themselves. Such conversion happened in but a few years. The Dacians turned to the cult of Zalmoxis and the new converts to his creed suddenly became the dominating caste of the region. These magi and cultists still exist in our era and are known with the name of Scholomancers because of the "Schola Nigra" they attend to consecrate themselves to Zalmoxis. To enter their sect, faith is not enough, but signs and portents must be recognized at birth and in the youth of the adept; for example, they must be born with the placenta around them or be the seventh child of a seventh child and similar prodigies. In a few years, thanks to the guidance of their priests and the teachings of their new gods, the Dacians became the "people of Zalmoxis" proper, and almost any other tradition, whether pre-existing or imported by the bordering people, were definitively put to the side.

Since then, since the morning of the world, although they admit the existence of all other gods, the fathers of the Dacians and all their descendants believe in and worship only Zalmoxis, and from this comes the mystic powers of the Scholomancers. The god of the Schola Nigra protects them from their enemies, the monsters, and feral beasts, although he requires blood sacrifices of his servants. So connected to their patron is this people that every attempt to convert the Dacians to the Official Cult and to eradicate the Scholomancers has been met with revolts and insubordination. Even their unintelligible calendar begins with the last earthly manifestation of Zalmoxis, and many are the celebrations and annual rites, often grim and cruel, dedicated to him.

A WARRIOR CULTURE

It was at the time of their adoption of the cult of Zalmoxis that this people of survivors took their destiny into their own hands and became the warriors we know today, refining the art of war to the excellence we have come to expect of them. Not versed in field strategies or sieges, they became formidable skirmishers, sappers, and foragers in the wilderness.

The older historical facts mentioning them already praise their skill in fighting, raiding, and hunting monsters and enemies, as well as being unbound, fearless in the face of death, and unwilling to surrender. And even today, when they choose to follow a leader or an ideal, they show bravery beyond sanity, with no fear of death in battle, whether their own or even their loved ones, if they believe the cause is honorable.

Centuries before the beginning of history, they would have defended in this manner their vague borders from the advance of the Germani, Scythians, and Gauls. Perhaps incapable of beating these nations with brute force, they kept them at bay and forced them to retreat through constant raiding, sabotage, and ambushes, always followed by lightning-fast retreats into the forests, leaving the battlefields as if they had never been there.

They were divided for a long time into kingdoms and empires in the most remote of pasts, their names long forgotten, and under their kings they defeated Greeks, Macedonians, and Persians, taking refuge when necessary in the lost city of Malva, their ancient capital.

Their fortresses became powerful strongholds built in key places of the country, hills, and plateaus, watching over roads, rivers, and natural resources. Being intimately familiar with the land, they used caverns, cliffs, natural tunnels, and rock faces as fortifications and defensive bastions, adjusting with the ingenuity and skill of men of forest and mountain what the terrifying nature of their country had already given them. Walls of boulders and blocks of stone were raised to defend their keeps, highlands and stone piles became their towers, escarpments and ledges their ramps, hidden staircases, and passages, and on the top of steep mountains they built villages and impregnable fortifications, close to the sky and surrounded by mountains.

Do not think of this as a simple historical rambling, as it still happens today that those among the Dacians who still hide and defy Rome know the remains and positions of such perfectly hidden and prepared places like the backs of their hands and launch ambushes against our own armies from there!

DACIANS, GETAE, MAGYARS, AND SCYTHIANS

Historians and geographers of the past have attempted multiple times to list the tribes and clans of the Dacians, losing themselves in endless hosts of families, nations, and populations impossible to attribute to a dynasty or even a land. Of the ancient inhabitants of these lands before the advent of Rome, there were more than fifteen different tribes, each of them, according to the elders of the most prestigious families, a direct descendant of forgotten kings and numinous spirits up to Zalmoxis himself. Each of these tribes had its own history, chronicles and myths, customs, colors of clothing, rituals or war paints, shape of their dragon banners, lands they lived in or originated from, and ancestral legends about them. Some of them were ascribed by the oral chronicles to the great family of the Dacians, others to that of the Getae.

And yet only they know the differences between these two ancestral divisions, while for us those names today are words for the same people.

There have been other tribes, there, too, since time immemorial, belonging to different populations, and other nations that have settled in Dacia for numerous reasons. They are of Thracian, Sarmatian, Gallic, and Magyar origin, and then Scythians, Cimmerians, Goths, and Vandals, the result of invasions and incursions partially forgotten by history.

Although for us such differences are barely relevant, all of them appear to the eyes of the Dacian tribes as strangers, walking their earth without right, almost like the Romans.

Many of them have eventually mixed their blood and customs with the Dacians' and have sought the protection of Zalmoxis, their original differences gradually fading through the generations.

What is beyond any doubt is that such a fragmented people is still today rife with internecine rivalries and centuries-old feuds, keeping the region unstable one way or another.

Not only must the authority of the Emperor keep strangers and barbarians, invaders and raiders, and looters and brigands at bay, but at least once a year these families scattered about the country decide to wage war on one another or repay old grudges with new blood, throwing entire regions into disarray.

ANCESTRAL RUINS AND THE SECRETS OF THE WORLD

If, then, the Dacians of whom I spoke above were so strong, so indomitable and ferocious, and if they have found in Zalmoxis an invincible celestial patron, you might ask how could we Romans break, conquer, and subjugate this province? To this question every native of the country gives the same answer. The mysterious truths of the Schola Nigra are contradictory and enigmatic, but there is a tradition that seems to come up with unusual regularity and harkens back to the remote past of the region.

Back in the time of our late Kingdom, this dark and secret god of theirs seems to have threatened with his black arts the Olympians, already worshiped in nearby Greece with worthy rituals.

Offended by such hubris, or perhaps scared of his threats, the gods asked Dionysus, the closest to Zalmoxis, to deal with the barbarous and proud deity. The god of wine and ecstasy summoned from Tartarus the Titans and unleashed them on the region, to stop this unusual enemy. The Titans dismembered Zalmoxis and attempted to consume his flesh, but it was so toxic even for their immortal stomachs that they were forced to abandon the pursuit. To avoid Zalmoxis being recomposed, they hid the seven parts of his body in as many caverns scattered about the region. Only one of them seems to have been found, the one with the heart of the god, and is today the secret shrine of the Scholomancers, a forgotten recess called Kogainon, the location of which is known only to their scholars.

Where the other six pieces of the unholy body of Zalmoxis are is yet unknown. Some may have been found and defiled centuries ago, others perhaps flooded by water or their accesses crumbled, and still others may even be watched over by the Schola Nigra. They are enormous and cursed recesses all, raised by the colossal hands of the Titans with large, polygonal blocks of stone in the heart of the earth or on the harshest mountains.

There is no need to say that any relic inside these shrines is considered by the Dacians to be part of their divine inheritance, and even one of them would confer great powers or spur entire tribes to action.

THE HEART OF ZALMOXIS

Among the canyons thick with impenetrable woodlands in the mountains around the heart of Dacia, in an underground system with many chambers and winding tunnels, is the Kogainon. The most important shrine to Zalmoxis, it is known only to a restricted number of his high priests. After a maze of passages in the caves, there is a large room carved in stone. At the center of the room, a staircase leads to a pit in the floor, at the bottom of which is carved an enormous spherical chamber, sixty feet in radius, its walls covered in black marble.

These regular stones bear gold-filled arcane symbols in the primordial language of the Daci. At its center, floating on an imposing marble pedestal, is a black stone that seems to pulse in the dark with a reddish glow. It is the Heart of Zalmoxis, the most important relic in possession of the followers of the god, one of the seven parts of his body torn by the Titans and surely the most precious.

A scholar approaching this matter with no prior knowledge or prejudice would learn that "the heart" is nothing more than a clump of celestial iron, perfect for making adamans (see page 99). Is this then the secret of the Black God descended from the sky and torn to pieces by the ancient Titans?

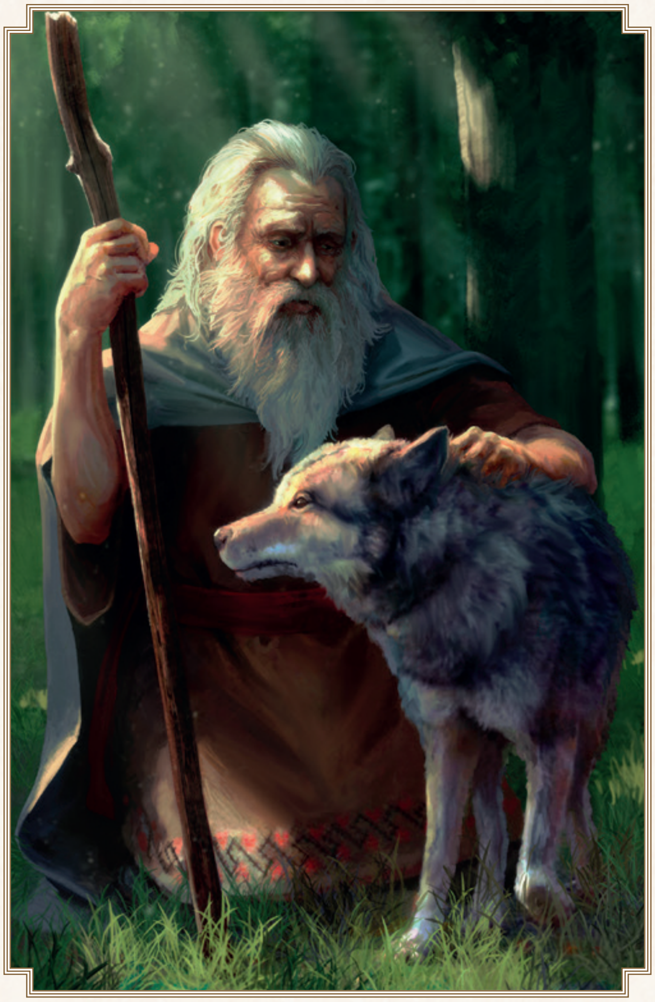
THE SHADOW BENEATH THE FOREST

And yet, the dismemberment of Zalmoxis and the end of his active protection of the Dacians might not have brought only good to us guardians of the province. With the greater might of the god now missing, the ancient terrors of the country seem to have slowly returned to darken the region. The first to return would be the Balauri in the ancient forests, especially the north, and it is told that an entire clan of Dacians was contaminated by their fearsome shadow. They are today called Androphagi, fallen into the most ancestral and savage of customs, and the other people accuse them, even with their name, of the most abominable habits: devouring men and capturing women to force an even worse fate on them.

It seems that even the last surviving Daigerna have begun striking again and bolstering their ranks by spreading the curse of the moon. The old pack leaders have made way for younger and more ferocious rebels, with no intention of honoring the ancient pacts or follow the rules of restraint imposed by the priests of Zalmoxis. And so, the Wolf Men of Dacia have reared their heads once again and have resumed biting and tearing. One of the tribes of the country, the Daursi, seems to be preferred by the Daigerna, representing their earthly arm. They live between the mountains on the border with Illyricum and seem to have a capital of theirs in Dausdava, "the City of Wolves", about which exist grim rumors.

Even one of the ancient Nosphorati seems to have awakened from her slumber, in the heart of the Graveyard of the Ancients, bleeding the most isolated villages. She is known as the Queen Under the Forest, Mormolyce, and all vampires and Gelloi (see page 123) of the region seem to be part of her malefic bloodline and answer to her inhuman commands.

If the reports of the Custodes are to be believed, however, the killer of Ulpia Traiana of whom I spoke at the beginning of this text, Axivarna, is not her spawn but another's, Apletos of Byzantium, and such a slaughter in the heart of the Empire, in a fortified city under the control of Rome, should be enough to contextualize the necessity for a generalized alert against such a threat.



THE GODS OF THE MOUNTAINS

Alongside the cult of Zalmoxis, the charms against the horrors of their country, and the superficial honors given to the gods of the Empire, there is another extremely rooted belief, the one in the Anemoi, the gods of the mountains.

This cult harkens back to Greek religion, and it was probably brought to Dacia by ancient settlers from the south. The Dacians do not remember the exact names of the Anemoi, nor their individual attributes, but they worship them as wild powers of the sky and relentless nature, of the mountain and storms. Prayers to the Anemoi are simple formulas cast for protection from the bite of cold, the fury of the winds, and bad weather, but for these men oppressed by nature such primordial forces are as real and present as they can fear and honor.

Although the Anemoi are feared by all in the region, their cult is mostly found in the Montes Sarmatici and Carpates, their best priests-sorcerers called Capnobates, "those who walk between clouds".

There is no direct source on the mystical powers of these storm sorcerers, but it is said they know how to tame lightning, fly from one peak to the other, and placate the rigors of weather.

The most faithful among the Dacians to the gods of the mountains are the lesser tribe of the Agathyrsi, famed for being even rougher and tougher than the common Dacians, although not as ruthless and brutal as the Androphagi.

The Agathyrsi rule over the ancient fortresses on the mountains, save those gold-rich regions under direct Roman control, and have provided the majority of the Capnobates. They paint their bodies and hair blue to honor the sky and the primordial forces they worship. They raise incredibly fast, resistant, and spry horses that they claim to be descendants of the very Anemoi. Piling gold in their castles atop the clouds, and it is said they can even bend the harpies to their will, these monsters that infest their mountains being considered another kin of the Anemoi.

THE CONQUEST

In spite of the land being as brutal and savage as the people living on it, the glory of Rome shone bright as the brave will of our glorious Emperors when we chose to annex it to the Empire. When we made our arrival in the northeast, the capital of the Dacians was Sarmizegethusa, a stronghold built on a vertigo-inducing cliff, controlling a chain of mountain fortresses thought to be impregnable. If you think the lords of the Dacians would be content with a frugal and martial life, know that back then this city was a mighty keep, built on five terraces with wide and thick walls, places of prayers and gathering for the population under arms, flowing water, and all facilities necessary to control the country, its administration, and its defense.

At first, the relentless resistance of these barbarians put to the test the legions of Domitianius, this is true. A few years later, however, Traianus dedicated Rome's entire attention to this country and eventually annexed it to the Empire, after a series of battles and a false surrender from king Decebalus, which was promptly forsaken when the armies of Traianus were far away.

Incensed at this betrayal, Traianus moved the legions of Rome again to Dacia, this time to eradicate any possible resistance. Hundreds of thousands of warriors took to the field, and these lands were soaked with blood for many months.

Eventually, the second campaign ended with the destruction of Sarmizegethusa and the capitulation of all tribes, as the entire Dacian aristocracy was dying or taking their own lives alongside Decebalus out of shame for the defeat and to avoid further degrading repercussions.

Dacia was then subjugated and annexed to the Empire. Millions of pounds of gold and silver were gathered and brought back to Rome, as well as hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war who livened the Triumph of the Emperor.

The numerous local tribes and clans, broken and subjugated through might, have never returned to the splendor and freedom of the past, as the exploitation of the enormous gold mines of the Square eventually began.

My recalling of such remote events is not idle reminiscence, but to make clear the reasons behind a modern and very much real danger. An entire generation of Dacians was destroyed, tens of thousands of warriors in the prime of their years left on the ground alongside thousands of other victims.

Such an immeasurable amount of death has scarred the country and its landscape. The sites of the great battles, like the passes of the Iron Doors and the Red Tower, are today so infested with Larvae and Lemuri as to be impenetrable. Swamps, cliffs, plains, and forests that were theaters of massacres and minor fights now provide a wide range of terrors and unnatural dangers, from reanimated carcasses that roam their grounds to the terrible Gelloi, who feed on the now-leathery remains of the dead, waiting for fresher meat. Our own engineers had to work extensively on many roads of the region, finding new and often longer paths to avoid such damned plagues.

Sarmizegethusa itself has been abandoned for centuries for a specific reason. There, the Dead still have their realm, the Lemuri a court, and the Larvae a sovereign. The Last King is the name given to the spirit that rules today from broken thrones and among dilapidated ruins, in halls upon which rain beats incessantly and the frost of winter looms.

The Dacians hesitate to call him by name, instead giving him titles such as the Grim Sire, the King of Tears, the King of Rain, and the King of Spirits. The Romans instead prefer to use a clumsy, disrespectful and incorrect moniker, although they fear him and keep well away from him. “Deceditus” is the name, and nobody has ever doubted that he is the restless soul of the last king of the Daci.

UNDER IMPERIAL RULE

The true story of the province of Dacia began back then, as a broken and defeated country turned into a defensive front against the hordes of the Mare Barbaricum beyond the limes, a key first line of defense against Huns, Goths, and Vandals, as well as for its impressive gold mines, the largest of the known world.

Apart from minor episodes of revolt and banditry and the dangers associated with its most remote reaches, Dacia has remained firmly in the hands of Rome since the times of Traianus, without any threats from within so dire that they would have cost us the province. However, it is the limes and the savage lands that make the Mare Barbaricum that have caused much worry and brought Dacia multiple times to the brink of war.

First the Vandals, as well as their allies and confederates, tried to invade the region and from there attempted to find a way into the Empire. Three centuries ago, the two kings of those hordes, Raus and Raptus, led a mass invasion against Dacia.

The limes at first held, fresh troops came to the help of the Dacian legions, and the Vandals and Germani were defeated and pushed back. For decades, Vandal pressure kept being felt. and it fell on the wisest Emperors and the best generals to work, with both gold and steel, to stem the tides of blades and pit the enemies of Rome one against the other.

The fragmented natures of clans, tribes, chieftains, and federations favored us back then, as it does now. Rome is strong and united, its intent one, its armies acting in unison.

Our enemies, on the other hand, thankfully are divided and constantly vying for supremacy or the settling of simple territorial or dynastic matters or for plunder. This has contributed for centuries to keeping the region under our control, although never, not even for one single day, have our legionaries slept with the ease of the just in time of peace.

Swabians, Marcomanni, Quadi, Juthungi, Iazyges, Herules, Burgundians, Varinnae, Carinae, Guthones, Rugi, Silingi, and a hundred other populations like them have pressed on the northern border of the country for centuries, always on the attack. And always have all of them been pushed back, with the favor of the gods and the excellence of our armies.

Do not be tricked into believing that these people are but a rabble of barbarians, however. Between them are excellent mystical and military traditions, gifts of prophecy and lore from the gods, capable generals, and noble aims, whenever possible brought under the influence of Rome, in Dacia as well as everywhere else. Visimar, Godisigelus, Gunderich, Genserich, and others are the names of their bravest and wisest kings, both unbound enemies and proud allies of Rome.

At the same time, the Goths emerged from the great Mare Barbaricum of northeastern Europa and began to press on the Dacian and Thracian limes. Ermanaric, Atanarich, Radagaisus, and Alaric were their most famous rulers, shrewd strategists and valorous warriors. None of them ever prevailed on us, but who can tell what the future has in store for us?

Perhaps a scion of the lost Cimmerians today shakes rattles in a crib, eyes as fair as frozen water, hair black and flowing, waiting to grow old enough to ride at the head of a mighty army against us to topple the eagle insignias... or conquer them!

What happens today, in addition to the storm constantly raging beyond our border, not even the gods know!

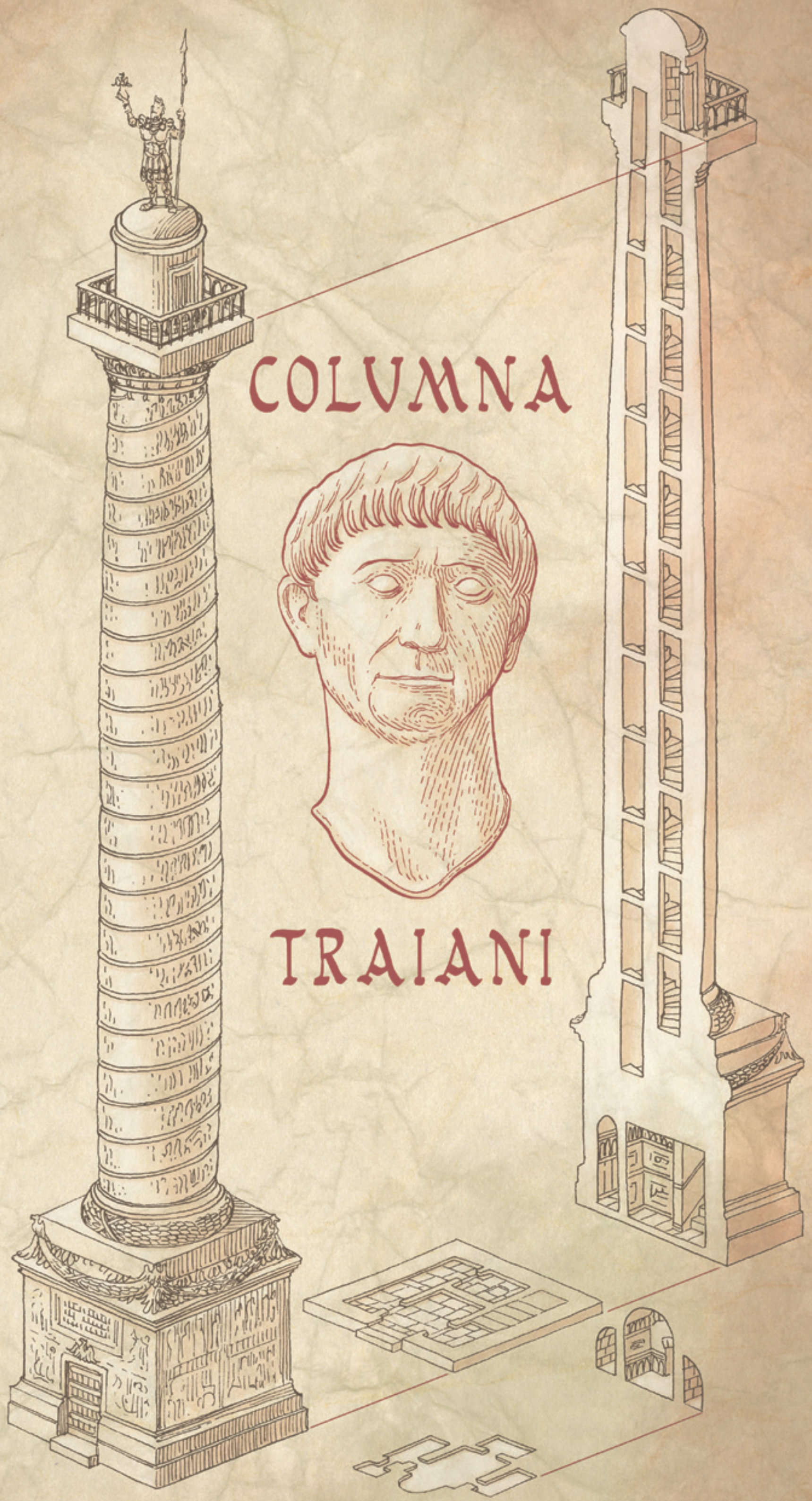
THE TRAIANUS COLUMN

The key events of the Dacian wars are represented on the extraordinary Traianus Column that since then has stood in the heart of Rome, at the center of the Forum, as was desired by the Emperor upon his return. As you know, the inside of the column is dedicated to Dacia.

In its basement is an official section of the libraries of the nearby Basilica Ulpia, open to the public. It contains in particular material on the geography, history, and mundane chronicles of Dacia.

In its upper chambers, commonly prohibited to the people and accessed from the endless inner staircase, alongside the golden urns of the Divus Traianus and his wife are kept the most confidential texts about Dacia from those years.
The tradition and the sacred aura these texts have accrued in time made it so that they were never copied into the secret libraries of the Cohors Arcana nor for the Library of Alexandria or other secret repositoria of Rome or Dacia itself.

So, if the Custodes are interested in secrets from the history of the province, there are not many sources other than the column.



HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

This digression on the story of Dacia and the information in the following chapter are reported so that the Demiurge will be familiar with what the Custodes "commonly" know. Access to such common knowledge in the majority of cases should not require rolls. Further details on these topics might be learned after a **De Scientia** roll, applying any appropriate Specialty. A Dacian character lowers the difficulty by 1 for any roll relative to that information and whenever appropriate.

The Demiurge can improvise the more advanced details of the history and geography of Dacia as they see fit, taking inspiration from textbooks, documentaries, movies, and novels.

DACIA - 1232 AUC

Dacia is one of the most strategically important provinces in the Empire, both for its role as bastion to the northeast, which it shares with Thracia, and for the great mines of the Golden Square, used in both past and present to keep the Imperial economy strong.

Gneus Fabius Macedonicus is the governor. He divides his time between his palace in Ulpia Traiana and the citadel of Apulum, attempting to rule this dark and dangerous land alongside Prometeus Pertinax, Legatus of the Legio V Macedonica, stationed in the capital, and Titus Graccus, Legatus of the Legio XIII Gemina, recently appointed commander of the legion garrisoned in Apulum.

There are no agricultural or industrial products that make Dacia indispensable to the stability of the Empire, and its other source of interest is the basin of the Danuvium, which allows movement, trade, and communication regularly, safely, and swiftly between the many provinces from the north to the Pontus Euxinus.

The Romano-Dacians who today form the backbone of the country are mostly the direct fruit of the colonization willed by Rome, summoned from the other Danubian provinces with the promise of trade and extraordinary fortunes.

Then there is a small presence hailing from the western provinces and Italia and the most loyal of the Dacian, Getae, Vandal, and Goth chieftains who have bent the knee in front of our banners have been granted status.

The rest of the population, mostly belonging to the ancestral Dacian kin, is still on the brink of barbarism, living according to the old customs of their ancestors.

THE GOVERNOR OF DACIA

Gneus Fabius Macedonicus
Value: DV8
1 die: De Bello, De Corpore, Hit Points, Sensibilitas
2 dice: De Scientia (Law), Ratio
3 dice: De Societate (Bureaucracy, Politics)
Hit Points: 8
Weapons: Pugio (Damage 3)
Protections: Lorica Musculata (Protection 10)

The governor of Dacia is a practical man and an expert bureaucrat, neither a man of action nor a great war leader, but a shrewd administrator. His habits are mostly sedentary, his travels between the cities of the province aside. Nor he is a man of excess or vice, his private life being that of a composed *pater familias*. His whitening hair, the wrinkles around his light and bright eyes, and some extra weight reflect both his strengths and weaknesses. He is a clever and prepared man, and there is no doubt that he knows how to wield political and administrative charges in favor of his family, friends, and clientes.

However, under his administration, the province is a perfectly working machine, and so far the Senate has not had anything to complain about. Through cunning management of matters both public and private, civilian and military, Macedonicus on one hand keeps the Dacians under control, including their most rebellious tribes and the followers of Zalmoxis, and on the other protects the borders from the barbarians, turning the exploitation of the gold mines of the region into an extremely remunerative endeavor.

If there is one thing he does not appreciate about his posting, it is the rigorous climate, his dream being to be able to move in a few years to the western provinces, or even his beloved Sardinia.

They are shepherds, farmers, and fishers, folk of mountain and woodland, who have learned our laws and speech but still consider themselves the usurped masters of the region. They wear clothing of beast hide, unkempt beards, and long hair. They are as savage and harsh as their land is to them, short and tough in body, indomitable against the adverse elements of their land. Arrogant and ferocious with the enemy, they do not fear death, for they believe in the immortality of the soul, the bravest warriors going to the infernal sky of Zalmoxis.

They are proficient hunters and fishers. Spears, javelins, and bows their favored weapons. Experience of the wilds and the ancient traditions of their elders have preserved their skill with natural poisons of herbs and beasts, so much so they often use arrowheads coated with toxins capable of paralyzing, numbing, and killing their victims. To improve their conditions and better integrate with the ruling class, many young Dacians enlist in the armies stationed in the country and provide an ever-precious aid in watching the borders, roads, and mines. They are skilled in scouting and in the crudest war operations, as well as in the use of the falx, bow, and pilum.

For some time now, an unknown and new population has begun wandering inside the borders of the province, authorized by our magistrates. They are called Avars and are dark-skinned and fair-eyed nomads with raven black hair and a cunning and mysterious gaze. They travel the length and breadth of the region, as well as the nearby provinces, coming from the east, and trade in arcane trinkets, brave and stout horses, toys, and an endless quantity of odds and ends. They do not live in cities, but only in their camps, traveling temporary settlements, often stopping at the edges of our villages. Although many accuse them of scams, small thefts, and gambling, they do not constitute an actual threat to the province.

The dire inner menaces of the country are the most isolated and rebellious populations, such as the Daursi, the Androphagi, and the Agathyrsi, letting alone the sinister and unnatural presences haunting many of the lands in the periphery. These dangers, however, have not yet called for an ultimate pacification campaign, which would take personnel from the defense of the limes, because they seem to strike only the most isolated Dacians and the populations of the wilder lands.

Much more dangerous today is the pressure of the Huns and the consequent threat from outside the province. These endless hordes, so ferocious and inhumane they terrorize even the barbarians of the hundred or more kingdoms between us and them, are ruthlessly devastating the lands of all of those populations.

At first, they sought an alliance with Rome for the defense of their borders, but the Empire cannot push so far on its own and fight a war that does not belong to it. For this reason, the great armed federations of the Mare Germanicum are gathering and moving toward us, to enter, one way or another, the borders of the Empire. Cunning as wolves, the Huns leave them be, well aware that letting Rome fight Germani, Vandals, and Goths plays into their hands by weakening all their potential opponents.

Today, the Vandals and other northern folk have gathered under the banners of Odoacer, who has Hun, barbarian, and Roman blood, with the moral cut and strategic skill of an Emperor. The Goths, on the other hand, alongside all their foederati, answer to Theodoric, worthy successor to Alaric, deadly strategist and beloved sovereign.

Against these two exceptional enemies, and the Hun generals behind them, the largest battle of our era will soon be fought, the one that may bring the Empire of Rome low, or consecrate it for a thousand more years to come!

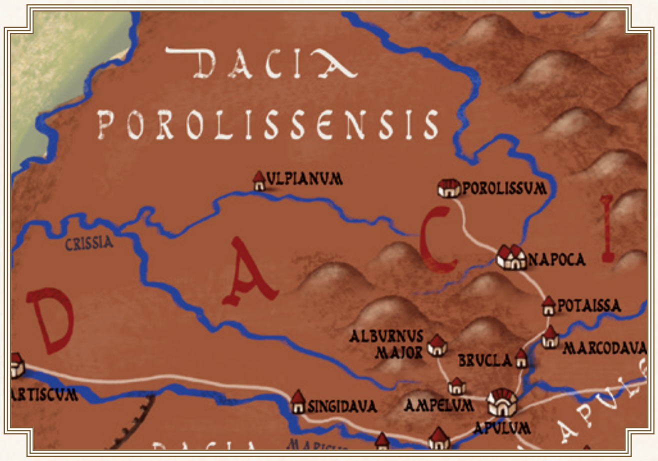
DACIA FROM A CROW'S EYE

Generally cold and densely-forested, Dacia is currently divided into four areas or regions, separated on the southern border from Thracia by the great course of the Danube.

Flavia Gallia Scholastica, De Praefecturae Imperii, Va 180-185.

THE FROZEN NORTH

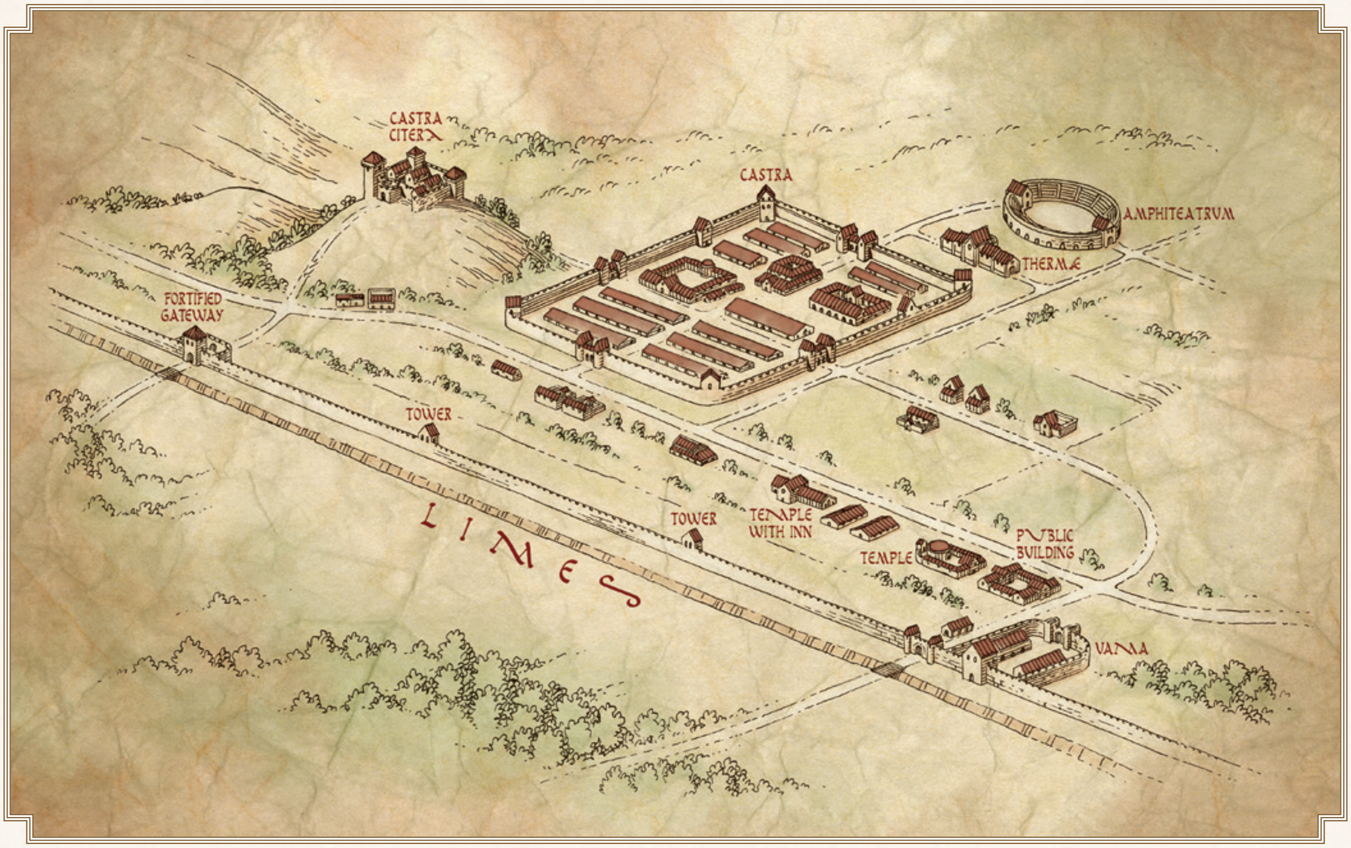
The settlements of Dacia Porolissensis, the northern-most of the four regions of the country, are the most martially-oriented and have the harshest weather and land. Here our ancestors have established the northern border of the province, using the steep mountains, thick, unknown forests, and desolate peaks as natural bulwarks.



This is crisscrossed with dozens of fast streams that plunge into rushing and cold rivers between lands with no roads, bridges, or fords. Especially during winter, this land is dire and inhospitable, a natural dam against the incursions of the barbarians beyond the border, the passes and paths that troops and carriages can take being but a handful.

Their primordial forests host dangerous beasts, mighty wild bison, and the forgotten Balauri that prey on them, while the sky is roamed by eagles, harpies, and other both natural and unnatural birds of prey. In the thick of the gloomy and shadowy woods hide the ferocious and inhumane Androphagi, while on the tallest and steepest cliffs the Agathyrsi have their miserable villages, both populations rather isolated from the rest of the world.

Crossing these lands without using the few province roads means abandoning the roads and paths of men and venturing deep into an outpost of the great forest of the world, endless wild land that extends outside and partially within our border.



Only guides, explorers, and expert hunters are comfortable here, and for them there is sure employment and wealth. Wild animals are abundant, as well as tasks related to war, such as patrolling, scouting, and sapping.

POROLISSUM, THE NORTHERN HEADQUARTERS

The fortified city of Porolissum is the most important center of the region, the central headquarters of the armies stationed here. Founded for purely military reasons, the center became a municipium centuries ago and today is a bastion to control the entirety of that wild land, as well as a trade outpost to the Mare Barbaricum to the north. Although its military nature is manifest and martial law regulates many of its uses and customs, Porolissum is a lively mercantile and frontier center where even the barbarians and foederati of the Empire are admitted, although under heavy restrictions.

Here the Custodes can learn many of the maneuvers and strategies that regulate control of the limes and take patrolling and security missions, such as scouting out unnatural dangers, retribution for and containment of the raids of the abject Androphagi, delivering dispatches, investigating the numerous dangers of the border and mountains, or hunting Balauri and other beasts infesting the woods. It is also a privileged place to meet Goth and Vandal spies, explorers returning from or leaving for missions beyond the border, informants, guides, sappers, and allies of Rome.

Here begins the chain of fortresses that watch over the north up to Angusta, in Dacia Apulensis, a city-fortress watching the east.

It is here that happened the first trade with the northern people and where their merchants, after passing through Imperial customs, are allowed to sell the goods produced in the barbarian kingdoms of the north: furs, gold, amber, gems, ivory and bone artifacts, and other similar riches. The city also has sacred and public structures of importance, built as a meeting point between different cultures and places of leisure for the legionaries resting or on leave: baths, customs, a small but functional amphitheater, and even theaters and places of worship.

Among these must be mentioned the Temple of Jupiter, the main in the city for the Official Cult, that of Libero, protector of excess, wine, and the most dissolute life, much loved by the legionaries in town, and that of Nemesis, whose protection is extended to the games in the amphitheater and the death the participants might find. The majority of the games are dedicated to fighting beasts and monsters of the forests, but also fighting more or less violent with champions from the barbarian kingdoms, who come to the city looking for fame as brawlers and warriors, and often prevail over Dacian or Imperial gladiators.

NAPOCA, WITHIN THE GRASP OF ZERCO

The center of Napoca was, too, a simple Roman military settlement before it grew into a town proper. Unlike the nearby Porolissum and Potaissa, aligned on the same road that from the border descends southwards to Apulum and Ulpia Traiana, it seems that in recent years Roman management has been left in less capable hands and the administration of the res publica has suffered.

Here the percentage of Dacians and other local folk is high. The Avars have one of their larger camps, and many are the squabbles,

THE DWARF OF NAPOCA

Zerco
Value: DV6
1 die: De Bello, De Corpore, Hit Points
2 dice: -
3 dice: De Societate, Ratio, Sensibilitas
Hit Points: 6
Weapons: Pugio (Damage 3)
Protections: None

Special Abilities: Acute Senses, Stealthy

In a world violent and unjust for the most gifted warriors, surviving and thriving as Zerco has, in spite of being a dwarf, takes the makings of a giant. This Zerco knows well, and this has been made clear to all who have dealt with him and seen beyond his appearance. Of the kin of the Mauri, bought and sold in his youth as a jester by General Aspar, by the king of the Huns, Bleda, by his son Attila, by General Aetius, by the Empress Galla Placidia, and by the father of Odoacer, Zerco survived and thrived in a world of continuous war and treachery until he found his place in the world as the true lord of crime of the province, always a step in front of any intrigue, fraud, or plot.

Short of legs and curved of shoulders, his feet crooked and his nose revealed only by his nostrils, Zerco might look grotesque and hilarious at a first glance, but judging him on looks alone would be a grave mistake. Behind his bizarre appearance hides a superhuman intellect and a wise soul.

tumults, traffics, and crimes committed before they can be punished. It is even said that the city often hosts deserters or refugees, salt smugglers, and Scholomancers, fleeing Dacia to the north or, on the contrary, ready to infiltrate our lands.

The Custodes who go there should be aware that here blades are often hidden from security checks and are ready to be drawn from under heavy cloaks, in the darkest and narrowest alleys, and that the rigor of martial habits is not much respected in Napoca. Rumors of sedition, betrayal, and deception often have their origins between the streets of this settlement, without our prefects being able to put a stop to them.

An old dwarf, Zerco, seems to be today a true patron of organized crime and local trafficking. He is cunning and knowledgeable, hailing from far away Mauretania, although it is said he has stood by the side of Attila and other Hun generals before betraying them and redeeming his freedom here. Untrustworthy and constantly on the lookout for betrayal, he often informs us of much illicit activity happening secretly in the city between the Avars under his authority, and it is for this double-crossing his people that we let him control smuggling in the region, although it is clear that he has been betraying and manipulating our own delegates for his own interest for decades. This does not mean the city is on the brink of rebellion, quite the opposite, but that the Roman yoke here is less stringent and effective than elsewhere.

POTAISSA AND THE SALT MINES

This center was founded by the Dacians before the Roman domination and was of great importance for them, as it dominates important salt mines, known since the most ancient times, just to the south of the city. Now under the domain of Rome, Potaissa has seen a great expansion in the last centuries and now is the seat of choice of numerous mercantile families, who have obtained control over the extraction of such mineral of the highest purity according to the greatest experts in the business. The Dacians are particularly jealous of this resource, now in the hands of Rome, both because they see the wealth of their land taken by invaders and because the “white gold” mined in these crooked and deep quarries is for them a sacred and precious substance. In their legends and doctrines of the Schola Nigra, the Salt of Potaissa is in fact particularly effective against Mormolyce and their spawn, to whom it is almost poisonous. In addition, it is rumored that one of the seven resting places of the torn body of Zalmoxis would be in the depths of these caves, in a secret and mysterious shrine, as it is that relic which confers upon the salt its supernatural properties. For these reasons, there is a thick and seemingly unstoppable traffic and smuggling of such goods around the mines and the city itself by the Dacians and the Avars, source of mild preoccupation in the potentates tightly connected to its trade. For the rest, Potaissa appears to travelers as a well-organized and -defended castrum, its management impeccable. Perhaps not as rich as the settlements born around the mines of the Golden Square, but surely prosperous and sought-after.

THE LINE OF THE NORTHERN FORTRESSES

From Porolissum to Angusta, the path that traces the northern limes counts more than twenty garrisons, between camps, watchtowers, and fortresses, all kept under constant alert.

Alongside the fortified centers is a series of palisades, barricades, and other bulwarks that make the first proper line of defense for the region, although none of those fronts could really stop a potential invasion from the north on its own.

To the north of this road are the lands once occupied by the so-called Free Dacians, and today are kingdoms and domains of the Vandals and their allies.

Day and night our troops watch over this border looking for enemy movements.

Along this chain of keeps runs a well-furnished and raised road, a fortification in of itself raised by a moat for long sections that the legions can use as a front of sorts in addition to everything else. The entire defense line, from Porolissum to Angusta, is roughly sixty miles long, which can be covered swiftly by couriers on horseback with enough changes of fresh mounts.

THE FROZEN NORTH - ENCOUNTERS TABLE

Roll 1d20 whenever deemed relevant. These encounters can happen both during the day and night.
Add 5 if the Custodes are far from a settlement (add 10 during the winter season).

d20 Roll	Event
1-10	**Nothing of note.** The day is calm, and nothing of note happens. Thank Mars!
11	**Legionaries on a mission.** The Custodes meet a group of soldiers on a mission (or who are leaving camp for a special assignment). By their furtive and tense look, their task is rather dangerous. If only somebody could help them...
12	**The caress of the Anemoi.** All of a sudden, the wind shifts two or three times and sudden breezes blow in the faces of the Custodes. It is “the caress of the Anemoi”, as the locals call it. The Custodes who whisper a short thanks to these numinous beings recover 1d3 Pietas.
13	**Goth spy.** The Custodes meet a wealthy and affable merchant who offers them favorable prices for his wares. The man is a good conversationalist and offers to help the characters only to find out what afflicts them and what business they have. He is in truth a spy of a Gothic duke, stationed in the lands just to the north of the border, waiting for his news.
14	**Salt smugglers.** The Custodes stumble into a duo of amicable rascals who traffic in Potaissa salt, precious enough to feed a small business. The Custodes can choose to turn them in to the authorities or use them to learn something about the local crime scene. Also, their wares, if properly sequestered, might have some use...
15	**Legionaries on leave.** These soldiers are on leave for the first time in months and are set on having fun no matter what, knowing their officers will turn a blind eye to many of their potential “escapades”. The Custodes can get alongside them or put them back in line.
16	**Deserters.** In camp or in the open, the Custodes meet a group of nervous-looking legionaries. Interrogating them and checking their answers with their knowledge of watch shifts and assignments of the local legionaries, the Custodes soon realize they are deserters, intent on escaping to the lands of the Goths, then bartering their lives for the information in their possession.
17	**Disconcerting omens.** All of a sudden, even if completely out of season, a hail of blood-red sleet grains the size of pebbles scythes the area around the Custodes. With the appropriate ritual, the Custodes might have an omen as to what awaits them.
18	**A traveling family.** Along the grassy trail or between the muddy roads of a settlement, the Custodes meet a large family traveling on a stout cart drawn by two horses. They look foreign, and a pall of sadness and fear hangs above them. They have been forced to find a new home for reasons they do not wish to reveal, unless the group passes an Auctoritas or De Societate roll.

d20 Roll	Event
19	**A mysterious clue.** The Custodes spot the remains of an item or weapon in the grass and stones, or in the gutter of an alley. It could be a fragment of a bloodied sica, pottery with an ancient inscription in the lost language of the Cimmerians, or a trinket dedicated to a Thracian deity. Whatever it is, to identify it and its function requires De Scientia rolls.
20	**A good hunt.** The Custodes spot in the distance game useful for their journey or mission. Out in the open, it could be a stag or a large animal capable of feeding them for days or, in town, a fugitive or a spy who knows something important. In either case, the group needs to pass De Natura rolls**.**
21	**A disconcerting meeting.** On the edge of the road sit a few feral-looking individuals, painted with tribal icons different from those of the Daci. It is a group of Androphagi, gnawing on strange bits of flesh and staring daggers at the Custodes. However, they are doing nothing wrong, as their meal is the legs of a large hare they killed the day before.
22	**Herd of bison.** Between the cliffs of the mountains and the wind-swept plains moves a herd of enormous Bolinthos (use the profile for Bulls in the Core Rulebook, but with DV12). Each of them is worth a small fortune in hide, horns, and food, but closing in on the herd means unleashing the rout of the titanic bovines.
23	**Claws in the dark.** In the area the Custodes are traveling wanders one of the last Balauri (see page 118) of this corner of the world. It is up to the Demiurge to decide if the characters find the remains of its last meal and can follow its tracks or if the monster starts stalking the Custodes, to attack them during the night.
24	**Eagles in the sky.** Seven wide-winged eagles fly in the sky above the heads of the Custodes, performing bizarre revolutions. It is up to the Demiurge to decide if this is an omen sent by Jupiter, animals fleeing from a supernatural threat, or if the birds of prey are headed to the site of a massacre, ready to gorge on the dead and wounded.
25	**Vandal Scouts.** A group of veteran Vandals, cunning as wolves, has crossed the border and hides in the area, looking for trails and hideouts for a future incursion. Use the profile for Barbarian Warriors (1:1 + 1 Barbarian Champion, see Core Rulebook).
26	**A courier in need.** A young messenger from a nearby camp wanders exhausted in the snow, wounded or after losing his mount. He bears an important message that must be delivered as soon as possible, but the direction he must take is rather different from that of the Custodes.
27	**Hungry wolves.** Descended from the mountains, leaving the shadow of thick forests, this pack of wolves is on the hunt and so hungry it might attack even contubernium of Custodes armed to the teeth. Use the profile for Wolves (1.5:1, + 1 Pack Leader with DV6, see Core Rulebook).
28	**Rebels.** A gang of Dacian outlaws hides in the wilderness of this land. They are only a few, but extremely violent and motivated against the Empire. They know many secrets about the villages and Dacian rebels of the local area. Use the profile for Mercenaries (1.5:1, see Core Rulebook).
29	**Brigands in the snow.** In the area where the Custodes are passing wanders a group of forsaken. The Custodes might spot their tracks earlier in the snow or see their silhouettes against white landscape, or it may go the other way around. The barbarians are wanted, cold, and hungry, willing to do anything not to be caught or die of privation... They know many secrets, trails, and shelters of the area. Use the profile for Brigands (2:1, + 1 Ringleader, see Core Rulebook).
30	**Ice storm.** Whether of natural or magical origin, these phenomena could prove deadly. First, the storm can be spotted from a distance to find shelter by passing a De Natura or Sensibilitas roll (DT 6). A failure means the storm catches the Custodes by surprise. If they did not find shelter in time, the Custodes must pass a Vigor roll (DT 9) or suffer from extreme cold (see *Unfavorable Weather Conditions* on page 123 of the Core Rulebook).

ALONG THE WESTERN FRONT

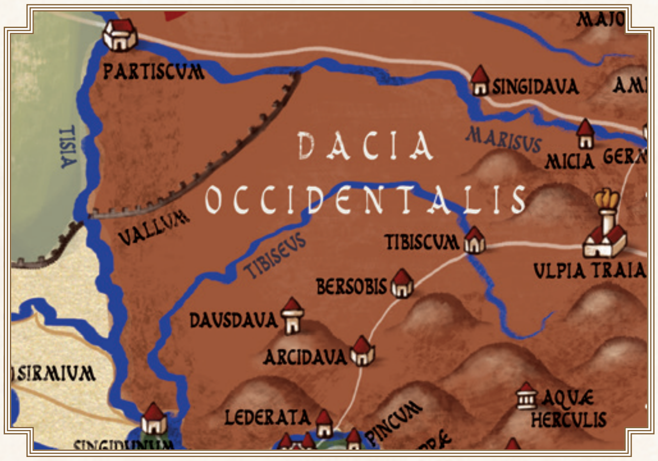
Western Dacia is one of the calmer regions of the province, at least militarily. Beyond its borders are the lands assigned to the so called Free Dacians, a federation of Dacian tribes that retreated or chose to live beyond the borders of the Empire while remaining its ally.

In the past there have been numerous attempts at revenge from these people, led by new dynasts, warlords, and the descendants of the ancient fallen families of the ancestral Dacian nobility. However, the firm and relentless answer of our legions has always made its iron fist heard, quelling in blood any attempt at rebellion, up to definitively crushing the dreams of reconquest of lands that, after all, have not belonged to them for ten generations or so.

Today, the Free Dacians are one of the federation of tribes that acts as buffer for the Empire against the pressure of much more dangerous and organized enemies and do not pose an actual threat in and of themselves.

Much different is the situation of raiders, bandits, and traditionalists, who instead still sometimes roam the region. In this part of the province, the Dacians remain the majority of the population, and the ancient culture, traditions, and original speech are very much alive. This happens through internal entrenchment, influences coming to and from the lands of the Free Dacians, and also the caravans of the Avars, often used to smuggle goods, people, and information across the border.

Another relevant threat is that of the wild and never defeated tribe of the Daursi, who have their last clans here. They are not brutal and aberrant like the Androphagi of the north of the country, but keep many primordial customs and traditions, are utterly incapable of obeying the Imperial directive, and are spurred by an indomitable rebel spirit. Over the centuries, the Daursi have been beaten and routed multiple times by our legionaries, but some pockets of resistance and nomadic groups keep escaping any manner of civilization, numbering almost a thousand scattered about the land, and a strong presence in Dausdava.



The wilder among them live in caves and ancient shelters, moving continuously and occupying the lost caves known to their people for centuries. It is said that their own chieftains are Daigerna themselves or servants of these monsters.

In any case, the proximity of these people with the lycanthropes of the region is beyond question. The nature of the region is not particularly hostile, unlike the north. The main hills and mountains are to the south, while the rest of the country is mostly plains, with many swamps and mires for the numerous slow rivers and the formidable rains all year long.

Where the local farmers have attempted to tame and farm the land, results have always been good crops of wheat, barley, and grapes, although the majority of their sustenance comes from hunting and river fishing. Numerous are the thermal springs in the region, in one of which it is said bathed Hercules himself, after splitting open the rocks with his maul. Here is still today a celebratory shrine that allows visitors to bathe, said to be beneficial not just for the body but also the soul.

PARTISCUM, NOTHING NEW ON THE WESTERN FRONT

This fortified city and the fluvial military harbor under its influence represent the western-most Dacian outpost, in a region contested for centuries between Romans, Dacians, Daursi, Sarmatians, and Iazyges. In spite of the numerous battles and sieges that have happened here in the past, today Partiscum is almost impregnable, garrisoned with thousands of soldiers.

It is key to the control of the lands of the Free Dacians to the west, but also to the rivers alongside them: the Marisus, on which it was founded, and also the Tisia and the Danuvium, to which it is connected. The large eastern road joining Partiscum to the rest of the province touches the city of Micia and Apulum and is kept under constant surveillance and maintenance.

On these important avenues of communication, all joining in Partiscum, travel men and wares, salt, gold, wine, animal skins, and timber. The relationship with the Free Dacians is tense, but profitable for both parties, and a great many traders from the west pass through the Partiscum customs.

Here is also based an important post service, with fresh mounts and lodging. Inns and taverns are among the widest-spread buildings in the city, and every day by its river docks come and go tens of barges and other vessels.

ARCIDAVA, THE GATES ON THE DANUVIUM

The settlement of Arcidava rises not far from the Danuvium and is the most important fortress on this river coming from the western border of the country. It is a control and customs center, but also it is tied to an Avar camp and a lively village of boat and ferry men, where Dacians, Avars, and Romans mix with the many local ethnicities. Here war, the limes, and the horrors lurking in the shadows of the country are remote rumors.

Arcidava is a busy and picturesque mercantile and travel center, in spite of its contained size.

Arcidava is also known for its cuisine, the local wine, and the dishes of fish and seasoned game so abundant they are always available day and night in the taverns along the river and the road. The streets are full of the smells of spiced and minced meats, smoked sausages garnished with Potaissa salt and garlic and pepper, sheep cheese with herbs, hearty vegetable soups, fish, rolls of cabbage, savoy, and grapevine filled with shredded game, roasted pike, sturgeon, and carp, coal cooked lamb soaked in wine and honey, nuts, and almond treats.

The local wines are strong and dense, blood red in color and reinvigorating, so much so they are the base for numerous spiced pharmaka such as Hippocras (see page 165 of the Encyclopaedia Arcana).

Famous are the aconite, garlic, and deadly nightshade poking up from all the courtyards and orchards, planted as a charm against the many dangers of the region.

AQUAE HERCULIS, THE SHRINE OF THE VETERANS

The grand shrine to Hercules of the region is also connected to a thermal complex managed by the shrine's personnel, a religious brotherhood dedicated to the god of strength, worshiped here in his aspect of soother of plagues, wounds of war, and bites of beasts, both physical and spiritual. In addition to the local population, Aquae Herculis is also the destination of numerous veterans and wounded from all the cohortes of the province, sent here to recuperate from their years fighting on the front or patrolling the wilderness.

For this reason, the shrine and the settlement around it are the ideal place for the Custodes to relax, recover their energies, and gather information on the front and other theaters. It is, of course, also the place to heal from wounds, diseases, and spiritual afflictions. For the Custodes of the Cohors Arcana, the doors of Aquae Herculis are always open!

TIBISCUM, THE CASTRA BETWEEN THE MISTS

Tibiscum is a fort along the road between Berzobis, Ulpia Traiana, and the course of the eponymous river, one of the most important of the region, sadly known for the Lemuri and Larvae crowding this land, especially to the east of the inhabited portion.

Here are supposedly located the Iron Doors, a fortified pass that was the theater of a devastating battle during Traianus's conquest. The road today runs several miles away from that haunted place, and yet there are nights when the restless souls of the dead venture onto the new road or even to the gates of the city, spreading their aura of corruption and evil, capable of scaring even the most fearless of travelers. According to the locals, one of the first signs of the arrival of the Lemuri is the rising of a fog around the travelers and a sudden cold clawing at their flesh and creeping into their bones. However, the fog, whether natural or unnatural, is so frequent in that area that it really is impossible to foresee its arrival or take measures to avoid it. Because of this, local travelers and traders prefer quickly crossing these cold mists and uttering the proper prayers instead of attempting to go around or turn back. Another way to travel about the region, by land or river, is to employ the Avars around town, who somehow seem to be immune to the dangers of the mist or have found a way to trick the Lemuri.

All over the region, there are a great many solitary travelers who have vanished into thin air or were found dead among the ditches after a night spent in thick fog. Scholars sent to inspect the remains speak of sudden spasms in the cardiac muscle, blood-curdling frights, hypothermia, and deadly falls into pools or canyons. I do not hide the fact that everybody in the area believes these phenomena to be of unnatural origin. Even the segment of the river passing by the town appears to be plagued with fluvial creatures, and were it not for the strategic and commercial influence of the town it would have been abandoned long ago.

THE SHRINE TO HERCULES

This austere and monumental place accesses the beneficial power of the subterranean waters and is managed by an order of priests dedicated to the care of the bodies and souls of those in need, especially the legionaries wounded in their service in the grim and perilous lands of Dacia. The Custodes can spend time resting at this shrine between missions, should they need special care (for example, against Permanent Wounds inflicted by some creatures).

To recover from insanity or other afflictions of the soul, a Custos must first be at the top of their Pietas score. They then must spend at least a week there, and longer is better. At the end of that period, the Custos rolls **Sensibilitas** to determine if their mind is strong enough to defeat the condition. The DT is usually 6, but the test could become a prolonged action requiring 3 successes, reducing the difficulty by 1 level (each roll equals one week of treatment).

If the roll is successful or the Custos has accumulated enough successes, they are considered healed. Other places in Dacia where it is possible to receive spiritual assistance are the shrine to Asclepius in Ulpia Traiana and that to Apollo in Apollonia.

Cleansing, invocations to the gods, and continuous warding rituals serve to keep at bay these unnatural dangers, but often such measures are not sufficient, and spectral hands take travelers even when they cross the river on barges or vessels, or even in the alleys of the town center.

MICIA, IN THE SHADOW OF THE ROOKERY

The small settlement of Micia is a control center along the road heading west from Partiscum into the one connecting Apulum to Ulpia Traiana. Much like the case of Tibiscum, it is known for its strategic position, as well as its sinister fame.

Not far from the center rises an abandoned Dacian fortress, known today as "Raven Hill", "Raven Castle", or simply "the Rookery". This sinister and towering place has been in ruins for centuries, and yet a few decades ago it became the home of a Goth family who asked to settle there, obtaining such permission for the merits in battle of its pater familias. It was soon discovered that they were none other than a renegade branch of a noble bloodline of that people, the Zarovinges, banished from their lands for dealings with dark powers and engaging in demonic practices forbidden even among those people. When a few maidens from Micia disappeared into nothing and foreigners were investigated, numerous clues seemed to accuse the comitus Stradrax, his relatives, and his servants of such dark deeds. After the investigation, the entire kin of the renegade Zarovinges was eradicated from the region and of them there was nothing to fear anymore.

However, in recent years, apparently lights and whispers have returned to the Rookery, and a disconcerting presence descends on it at night to attack the living inside the walls of the village. The reports of the magistrates of Micia agree on the involvement of the local Avars with the matter, and that they could even be in league with the shadow that has descended on the Rookery, who many claim is none other than the old comitus Stradrax, even if he should have been dead and buried for decades.

BERZOBIS, THE OUTPOST IN THE LANDS OF THE WOLF

Berzobis is a town of hunters, skinners, and tanners, attended by many traders and merchants of the region, including the Avars. Roman presence is strong and compact, reinforced by the allocation of an entire legion to guard the contested territories and to protect Ulpia Traiana, although it limits itself to the control of the roads headed east to south, respectively to Tibiscum and Arcidava. There is nothing to the west. There are no roads and no outposts or settlements other than Dausdava, from Berzobis to the River Tisia. This does not mean Berzobis is a calm city or that it does not have reasons to exist.

To the west of its walls, and to the course of the river that embraces the province from the west, are the dangerous and threatened lands where live the last descendants of the Daursi and roam the Daigerna and their chieftains. Feared even by the Dacians, these regions are claimed by some of its most savage and ferocious inhabitants, who consider those lands their own independent territory.

The Prefect of Berzobis continuously asks to proceed to hunt and exterminate these creatures and subdue the barbarians who live alongside them, but the truth is that beyond the belt of cultivated fields surrounding the area are the hunting grounds of which the Romans are anything but the masters. It is important to stress once more how the caravans of the Avars seem to enjoy freedom of passage out of an agreement or whatever other dark dealings with the Daursi, so they are not attacked. This is why many turn to these nomads to face the dangers of traveling in those lands.

DAUSDAVA, THE CITY OF WOLVES

The only recognized settlement of the area between Tibiscus and Tisia is Dausdava, "the City of Wolves". A village of mercurial and gruff people, it is right on the border with the lands of the Free Daci. Dausdava has no Roman garrison, and our citizens would never dare set foot there, for it is barely a few houses with muddy alleys surrounded by a crude palisade, to which lead vague trails. This is an outpost for hunters, wanderers, guides, tanners, and explorers, that at best gives a roof to lost travelers.

It is said that there is no reason to believe the opposite, that the locals are all Daursi or forgotten and forsaken Dacians, and yet it appears that, whether for ease of living or cold machination, there are not as many assaults, murders, or thefts as one would think.

Yet the inhabitants of Dausdava look unnerving and have a yellow light to their eyes, never dispelling the dark legends of the region. There is no doubt that at least one of the Daigerna chieftains is the patron of the village or the leader of one of its main families.

ALONG THE WESTERN FRONT - ENCOUNTERS TABLE

Roll 1d20 whenever deemed relevant. These encounters can happen in any season. Add 5 if the Custodes are far from a settlement (add 10 if traveling at night).

d20 Roll	Event
1-10	**Nothing of note.** Mercury be praised!
11	**A craftsman in need.** The Custodes meet a craftsman in his shop or a peddler on the road, fuming and cursing. If they stop to learn the reasons for his ire, they learn a competitor has beaten him to a series of clients, as, he says, that rival is of a cult and ethnicity is more "acceptable" than his. If only somebody could help him prove his wares are vastly better...
12	**The horse merchant.** A silver-tongued and quick-of-whip Avar trader has numerous deals for the Custodes, trading in horses, precious items, and information. Although he seems a traditionalist and somewhat wary barbarian, he is sincere and friendly, and his prices are rather favorable.
13	**Ceremony for Zalmoxis.** The Custodes observe a priest dressed in black pass a knife across his arms multiple times, spilling his own blood for Zalmoxis. If they stop to witness this, the man screams forbidden verses at them and casts his blood on them (Ratio roll against DT 6 to avoid being Cursed).
14	**Corrupt legionaries.** These soldiers are tasked with patrolling the nearby paths and roads, but it is evident they receive money to turn a blind eye to illicit traffics taking place right under their noses (fencing, smuggling, minor banditry, and suspect travelers). The Custodes can deal with them the nice way or put them back into line.
15	**Pugilists.** In a clearing, the grass is sectioned with stakes and rope, and a few Daursi pugilists and brawlers are practicing their very violent traditional techniques and rules. A volunteer for those violent games is always welcome, and the other fighters could be well-disposed towards them if they behave properly.
16	**The oracle of Nemesis.** The Custodes meet a crazy-looking dwarf who seems to be waiting for them. As soon as they pass in front of him, the strange individual begins speaking backwards in Thracian, foreseeing dark omens in name of Nemesis. With a De Scientia roll (DT 9, DT 3 if they know the Thracian language), the Custodes can interpret his words with varying degrees of accuracy.
17	**The cook of the gods.** The Custodes meet a haughty individual traveling or strolling with his retinue. He is Cannavacciones, the most famous cook in Arcidava, also known as the "Cook of the Gods". If the Custodes respect his fame and pass a **De Societate** roll (DT 9), Cannavacciones invites them to the tastiest meal they have had in the last months, at the end of which the Custodes recover 1d3 Hit Points.
18	**A mysterious building.** The Custodes spot the ruins of a rundown building. If they are in a settlement, none of the bystanders seem to remember its ancient purpose. On a De Scientia roll (DT 6), they can piece together its history as an old fortification from the Dacian wars. On a bas-relief inside, hidden by vegetation, it is possible to discover clues about the enemies or mysteries the Custodes are currently investigating.
19	**Wrong turn.** Under torrential rain, the Custodes lose their bearing and are lost. In town, they could be delayed by a few hours at worst, but outdoors a De Natura roll (DT 6) is required to find their bearings or at least a shelter for the night.
20	**A strange priest.** The Custodes meet a mountain of a priest, his neck as thick as a bull's and his arms the size of hams. He is part of the cult of Hercules from the shrine in Aquae Herculis, who travels the region spreading the faith of his patron and giving support and assistance to Custodes and veterans.

d20 Roll	Event
21	**Road from the Rookery.** A few women and their children are traveling to the closest settlement. They have escaped from the town Micia and the grim shadow of the fortress that is spreading death and decay there. They have already endured many privations and need an escort to their destination.
22	**The trap.** A rather conspicuous trail of fresh blood leads to the thick of the woods. The footprints are hard to recognize, but look like those of multiple people. However, it is a bait. Three men tied together and made to walk almost to bleeding out completely were meant to attract the Custodes into the jaws of a Daigerna (see page 116).
23	**Herd of horses.** A magnificent herd of wild horses, all of great quality, roams nearby. To tame them requires a De Natura roll (DT 12) and numerous hours. In such case, the Custos obtains a wonderful Racehorse (see Core Rulebook).
24	**Free Daci.** A group of Free Dacians travels these lands. They are not invaders, owning the proper paperwork, but they have something suspicious about them and they seem to be hiding something. Perhaps they intend to deal for a batch of weapons from Ulpia Traiana or are there to scheme with some Vandals. Use the profile for Barbarian Warriors (1:1, + 1 Barbarian Champion, see Core Rulebook).
25	**The caravan.** An Avars caravan of six wagons, forty people, and twice as many horses is traveling to the west. Joining these travelers after proving they mean no harm, the Custodes have the chance to cross numerous dangerous places without issue.
26	**Eyes of coal, icy fingers.** The Custodes have made camp close to the site of an ancient battle, where the restless shades of Dacian warriors still roam free. The Custodes either realize the danger early on a Sensibilitas roll (DT 9) or are ambushed during the night. Use the profile for Larvae and Lemures (1:1, see Core Rulebook).
27	**Wolves on two legs.** The Custodes find strange tracks belonging a rather large wolf, although they recognize only the hind pair of paws, and they look quite fresh.
28	**Abject servants.** Somebody has been following the Custodes for some hours, ready to attack them during the night, as they are sleeping around the fire. They are Gelloi (1:1, see page 123), deformed and monstrous servants of a local vampiress, out to bring a gift of fresh blood to their lady.
29	**Gnawing.** A horrid gnawing sound comes from somewhere around the Custodes. They are the restless dead buried nearby, who gnaw at roots and their own fingers out of insatiable hunger. Should the Custodes investigate, the dead will emerge from the ground howling and calling forth others for the meal. Use the profile for Reanimates (2:1, see Core Rulebook).
30	**The spirit of blame.** At sundown, in the distance, the Custodes spot a rider on the road. It is hard to identify him as a Rider of the Dead (see page 121), enshrouded in a cloak of gloom and macabre frost. The Rider stares with blame and hatred at the Custodes, as they represent the civilization that caused his shame and death centuries before. The characters can attempt to speak to him and convince him of their good intentions with a De Societate or similar roll; depending on the result, the spirit could spare them or only cast a Curse on them.

THE HEART OF DACIA

The heart of Dacia is a plateau protected all around by the Montes Sarmatici and Carpates, a chain of mountains dotted with forests so thick and impenetrable they are called “Ultra Silvam”, beyond the forest, or Partes Transsylvanae, “Transylvania”. This is the most prosperous, important, and civilized part of the region, but also the most gloomy and disconcerting, according to all its legends.

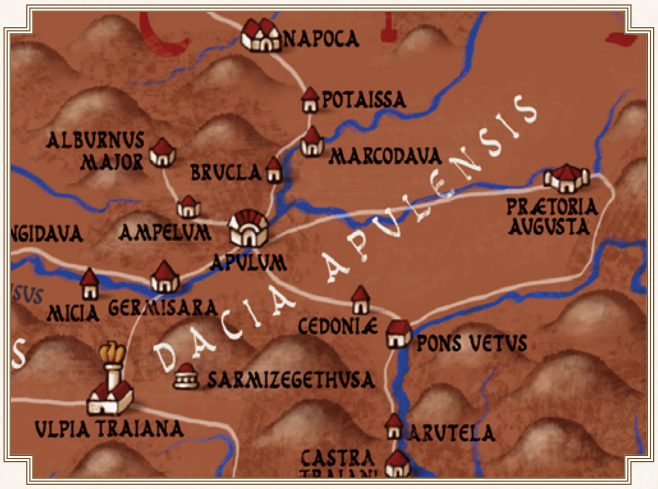
Here are said to reside the King of Woes and Mormolyce, two of the darkest threats of the region, and among these lands is also said to be the Kogainon, the lost shrine to Zalmoxis known only to his Scholomancers...

In this region, one can discern two very different landscapes: the north, with less mountains and known as Transylvania Plain, and the south, carved by deep valleys and canyons.

In spite of the numerous settlements built before and after the conquest, its villages, watchtowers, post stations, and farms, the entire region still shows part of its ancient and indomitable nature.

Far from inhabited land, conquered countryside, and good roads, it is dotted with sharp ice-capped peaks, snowy fields, dark and thick forests, and misty plains.

The abundant rains soak the ground, summoning mists at sundown that conjure ghastly atmospheres. There are a great many swamps, mires, and bogs, although our engineers have since reclaimed much and plotted safe roads between the various settlements.



ULPIA TRAIANA, CAPITAL OF DACIA

The city that controls and rules over the entire province, alongside Apulum, is a center that in the western lands of the Empire would be considered a medium town. Here, however, for lack of alternatives, it is the capital of the province. It is home to around a hundred thousand people, scattered on a hundred or so hectares and protected by tall and sturdy fortifications.

The foundation of Ulpia Traiana harkens back to the age of Divus Traianus, born from the destruction and consequent abandonment of the previous Dacian capital, Sarmizegethusa, whose macabre atmospheres and unnerving presences were never allowed to be rebuilt.

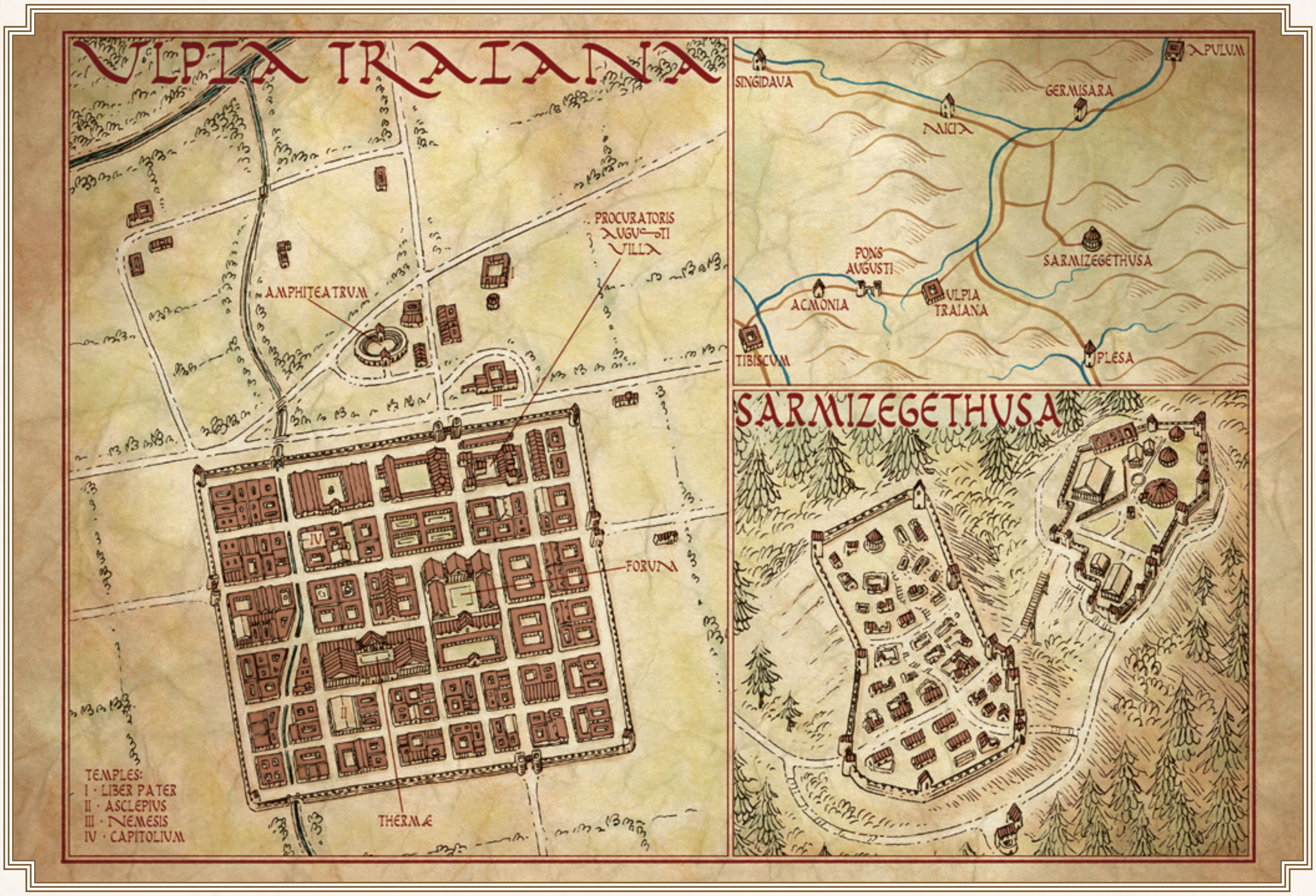
The exploitation of the rich mines of the Golden Square has its main seat here, its fruits, as well as the management of the mint, held by a Procurator directly tasked by the Imperial family. As such, the numerous merchants and bureaucrats living here can split procurements, contracts, and public works.

Ulpia Traiana is also the site of lavish baths and fountains fed by wonderful aqueducts, theaters, fora, granaries, amphitheaters, and a renowned gladiator school. There are also numerous shrines that form the main religious center of the province and cover all the necessities of cults such as the Capitolinus, the one dedicated to Nemesis and Liber, much venerated in the region, and that of the temple of healing dedicated to Asclepius. Around the city are situated numerous *villae rusticae* that complement the workshops in town.

This is also the place where each year gathers the Concilium Daciarum Trium, the council of the delegates of the recognized Dacian tribes, to settle all sorts of matters or rivalries, between each other and between them and the Empire as well. Even after centuries, this annual event still sets off more feuds or leads to settling of old scores between the surviving ancient Dacian dynasties.

The city, in short, is a prosperous junction on the trail of gold that starts in Ampelum and touches Apulum, the administrative center of the region and the heart of the country. For these reasons, in spite of the provincial and grim atmosphere that travelers sometimes experience when delving deep into the harsh and desolate lands around the inhabited center, this is a place of patricians, wealthy merchants, and luxury.

It must also be pointed out that there is in the city a large delegation of Gothic foederati from Moesia Superior entertaining trade relationships with their relatives in Durostorum, who requested and obtained the building of temples dedicated to their own deities. Absent from the town, or present only after they have taken great measures of secrecy, are Avars, Daursi, Agathyrsi, and Androphagi, who tend to stay far from the seat of Roman power.


VLPIA TRAIANA
PROCVRATORIS AVGVSTI VILLA
AMPHITEATRVM
III
IV
FORVM
II
I
THERMÆ
TEMPLES:
I · LIBER PATER
II · ASCLEPIVS
III · NEMESIS
IV · CAPITOLIVM
SINGIDAVA
APVLVM
GERMISARA
MICIA
PONS AVGVSTI
ACMONIA
VLPIA TRAIANA
SARMIZEGETHVSA
TIBISCVM
PLESA
SARMIZEGETHVSA

THE HEART OF DACIA - ENCOUNTERS TABLE

This table is meant to represent the encounters that could happen in the capital or the major settlements of the region. Roll 1d20 whenever deemed relevant. Add 10 if the encounter happens at night.

d20 Roll	Event
1-10	**Nothing of note.** Everything is fine. Pluto be praised!
11	**Dacian idealists.** A group of young Dacians is being roused by the words of an elder under a porch, perhaps a priest of Zalmoxis. The old man is stoking the fire of their zeal and wants to push them to perform some act of rebellion against Rome. Not far away, the Vigiles are about to intervene... But what if the old man were but an informant or a traitor to his people? What if he were working with the guards? Those lads are really too young to be thrown behind bars...
12	**Cutpurses.** The neighborhood around the main forum of the town is plagued by a gang of local thugs who demand cold, hard sestertii from the small traders in exchange for “protection”. The Custodes witness with their own eyes such a “request”.
13	**The plot of the Concilium.** The Concilium Trium Dacicum is a conclave that gathers representatives of numerous Dacian tribes and acts as a sort of senate or government for the original inhabitants of the region. It is not a peaceful or universally accepted authority, however. It is about to break out in another internecine rivalry that will split the Concilium into two factions at each other’s throats and ready to draw blades. And all beknownst only to the diplomat wounded unto death that the Custodes are about to meet...

d20 Roll	Event
14	**A message from Zerco.** The dwarf Zerco, true lord of smuggling and crime in the region, asks to speak with the Custodes to give them information on what they are working on. The message does not specify where and when the meeting is set to take place. “If you really are as good as they say, you will find out on your own,” is the riddle of the mysterious patron.
15	**Attempted pickpocket.** A pickpocket stalks the crowd. A successful Sensibilitas roll (DT 6) spots him, otherwise an item of worth (a weapon, the purse, a scroll, etc.) is stolen from a Custos.
16	**A Thracian play.** The local amphitheater will soon host special games, in honor of a battle won in the past against the invaders from the north. The show boasts a group of famous Thracian gladiators, some of whom bear typical arms of the region: Dimachaerii, Sagittarii, and Thraex (see page 111).
17	**A dark omen.** While the Custodes pass by a public building, the votive icon in a recess of the wall begins to weep blood. It seems a rather dark omen, which could be interpreted with the proper ritual.
18	**Lazy bureaucrats.** At the town market, the traders and craftsmen engage in all manner of dishonesty, as the magistrates tasked with watching over them do not care about anything other than their own business and other irrelevant matters. With a brief Investigation (DT 6, 3 successes required) the Custodes gather in a few hours enough evidence of their negligence to have them punished right away, or to blackmail them.
19	**A golden clasp.** In a corner far from sight, dirty and deformed, is a small golden clasp in the shape of a rider. After cleaning and straightening it, on a successful De Scientia roll (DT 9) the brooch is recognizable as a symbol of the “Thracian Rider”, an amulet that has a great symbolic value. Handing it to a trusted member of the Thracian community in town, the jewelry is soon returned to its owner, who thanks the Custodes with a blessing in the name of the Rider (from now onwards, the blessed characters can learn the Indigitamentum of the Thracian Rider, see page 105).
20	**Rotting meat.** Wandering about the town meat market, on a successful De Natura or Sensibilitas roll (DT 9) it is possible to spot cuts of rotten meat sold by a dark-skinned stranger. Investigating further, the group realizes the meat seems of human provenance and might be infected with a pestilence or illness. What is happening here?
21	**Old beggar.** An old and kind woman lives on the street, with collected dignity. To the Roman citizens, she is but a beggar, but the Dacians and Avars revere her as a queen, bringing her gifts and kneeling in front of her. Some claim she is the last descendant of Decebalus, others she is a high priestess of Nemesis or the “Bride of Zalmoxis”. What if one of these stories were true?
22	**Fleeing rats.** Rats suddenly flee from a nearby building. What could have ever caused those critters to escape in such a hurry?
23	**Just a couple drunkards.** Two aging veterans, a Dacian and an Italic, are drinking together outside a tavern, reminiscing about the good old days and making a ruckus. The two are lost in reminiscing about old times, when one chased the other in the forests of the region, first as guard and thief, then as deserter and auxiliary, eventually both as wanted renegades. Now, pardoned of all their crimes, they are free to drink together and can help any who buys them drinks with their useful memories.
24	**Night patrol.** The Custodes meet a town patrol, a loud group of Vigiles. The guards have nothing of use to tell them, and for the rest of their route nothing noteworthy happens.
25	**Conspirators.** A small group of aging figures moves between the streets of the wealthiest district of the city, gathering at the old thermal complex now closed to the public. In the room reserved for them, the elderly members of this suspect coterie plot the demise of a well-respected pater familias. If the Custodes eavesdrop for some minutes, they realize it is a scheme yet in its early stages and most likely destined to fail, which has nothing to do with their investigation, yet another matter of rivalry and power playing between the rich and the local politicians.

d20 Roll	Event
26	**Too quiet a night.** All of a sudden, the district the characters are in grows suddenly silent, all noises simply stopping. When this happens, the locals say in hushed tones that “Mormolyce passed”. Luckily for everyone, it is but a silly superstition. Right?
27	**Town leisure.** A group of patricians is returning home after spending the afternoon at an event. They stare at the group in amused stupor and one of them recognizes them as Custodes, only to ask for a tale of their deeds.
28	**Blades in the night.** Criminals and thieves from the underworld are about to settle a score. If the Custodes stay out of it, the matter has no consequence. If, instead, the group helps either party or attempts to arrest both, after a few clashes they realize they have dealt a grave blow to local crime, and perhaps some street urchin might be thankful!
29	**Gelloi.** Disconcerting noises comes from an abandoned warehouse close to the edge of the settlement. Inside, (1:1) Gelloi (see page 123) are devouring the remains of an old beggar they surprised earlier. When faced with a group of Custodes, the foul creatures try to escape first, and then, if left without other options, fight to the death.
30	**The shadow of the Vampire.** A faint moan can be heard from an open window overlooking an alley. If the Custodes take interest in the matter, on the third floor of an insula a Vampire is consuming its dark meal, leaving its victim barely breathing. The monster leaves the room a brief moment later, satiated and distracted. It could be followed to its lair, a nearby cellar, or caught by surprise.

APULUM, THE CITY OF GOLD

If Ulpia Traiana is the administrative capital of the province, Apulum is its wealthier heart, the first tapping from the auric bounty of the Golden Square. Because of this, it has been known for centuries as Chrisopolis, the City of Gold. Born as a castrum like Ulpia Traiana during Traianus's wars, the city grew until it became a political, commercial, cultural, and economic center comparable to the capital, second only in administrative power and population. Since time immemorial, here has been garrisoned an entire legion, to protect the capital as well as the mines. More recently, the jurisdictional authority of the governor of the province, the Legatus Augusti Pro Praetore Gneus Fabius Macedonicus, was moved here, a short way to the east of the legionary fortress, eventually making Apulum the second largest city in Dacia. Its climate is mild and more favorable than the capital, the air clean and healthy.

The most famous person in town is Titus Graccus, Legatus of the Legio XIII Gemina, recently risen to the post. He is a cunning, stern, incorruptible warrior, a true nemesis of local crime.

Such a strong military presence seems to have dispelled many of the threats, even that of the vampires that plague Dacia. Numerous wealthy Romans prefer to keep their families here, safe from the sinister evils of the country.

ALBURNUS MAIOR, THE GOLDEN FORTRESS

The Golden Square is the nickname of the mountainous region to north of Ulpia Traiana and to the northwest of Apulum. Here are the mining settlements that are so important to our presence in the northeast of the continent, each located at the mouth of a different quarry, the largest gold mining complex in the known world.

The mines of the Square count miles and miles of tunnels and digs, halls, workshops, passages and air vents, and settlements and necropolises for those who work there, almost all of Dacian or barbarian origin. According to their contracts and agreements, most of them are freed from servitude and any charges lifted after their due years of extenuating toil, although not all survive long enough. The Golden Fortress of Alburnus Maior is the administrative center that directly watches over and oversees the mining works and, in addition to the numerous contingents of the legion stationed in Apulum, hosts the procurers, minor functionaries, archivists, and scribes dedicated to such a lucrative activity, almost all loyal directly to the Imperial family. Here are based many of the slave owners and contractors of the mining activities, each with their own location and exploitation contracts, and the Collegium Aurorum that gathers them, as well as the shrine to Pluto, protector of miners.

However, because many of the slaves and prisoners employed in the mines come from the barbarian *mare magnum* beyond the limes and the tribes of the Dacians, Daursi, Agathyrsi, and even the Androphagi, it is said that the darkest pits of the quarries are covered in invocations to Zalmoxis, the dark lords of the Daigerna or the Anemoi, or to Vassago, lord of the Gothic sorcerers. Against the shine of gold and the fresh air of the surface, where work merchants and foremen, the bottom of the gold mines is a grim, suffocating place, soaked in blood and echoing with curses.

Sometimes slaves and prisoners disappear, and their bodies are never found. Were they lost in the lightless recesses, or did they fall into wells that they could not climb back out of?

Other times, horrific moans and feral growls echo from the darkest reaches of the quarries. Are they just common sounds and the voices of the miners?

SARMIZEGETHUSA

Abandoned and destroyed centuries ago, the ancient Dacian capital is today but rainy ruins haunted with exiles, and maybe larvae and Gelloi. Although great ancient treasures of the past still lie between its rundown walls, under roofs and broken ceilings and among the swamps that have reclaimed it, nobody dares to wander among the rubble and mud of the defeated Dacian capital, its accesses patrolled by legionaries of the Macedonica, tasked with letting none pass.

Here is said to still reside the King of Tears, the Lord of Specters: none other than the spirit of Decebalus, surrounded by his ghostly court, after all his noble vassals took their own lives after him, so as not to become prisoners of Rome. The presence of this dreadful place in the heart of Transylvania is part of the price paid for control over the region that nobody, not even the envoys of the Cohors Arcana, has yet managed to defeat. So tragic is the fame of this place and its surroundings, that not even the cunning Avars dare to venture into its proximity, their caravans never moving closer than a mile.

ECEDITUS AND THE EXERCITUS MORTUORUM

Sarmizegethusa is a cursed place. No matter how much divine power the Custodes command, no matter if they get there at noon laden with talismans, sacred weapons, and blessings, the specters haunting these ruins will always defeat them. At best, the Custodes can escape unseen, become cursed, or escape death and insanity by the skin of their teeth. Here, the power of Larvae, Lemuri, eldritch mists, shadows, Riders of the Dead, and Deceditus himself is overbearing, and there is no frontal assault that can defeat it. The Demiurge can use any rumor, information, or omen available to the Custodes to present their players with this truth; facing the Grim Sire in the heart of his realm means only death.

There are, however, other opportunities for the cunning Custodes. The cold adamans of the Calibi, used by the Titans in their wars against the gods, and bright torch flame can keep these spectral apparitions at bay, and even make them flee. The same effect can be had by the most powerful Indigitamenta dedicated to Apollo and Pluto. Sneaking into the city to spy on the dead is not impossible, if the Custodes obtain the favor of the gods specifically for that task, and it is even possible to speak with Deceditus, passing appropriate **Auctoritas** and **De Societate** rolls.

The King of Tears is not a mindless and inhumane monster, but rather a melancholic and spiteful soul. The *Exercitus Mortuorum* (“Army of the Dead”) he is gathering is not meant to destroy Dacia, but to avenge its fall at the hands of Rome and to banish its ancient invaders. Should the Custodes prove to him that the true enemy is now the savage raiders from the north and the Empire is now an ally of the Dacian people against this common enemy, perhaps the Army of the Dead would march against Huns and Goths, rather than the Roman citizens of the province.

Deceditus
Degree of Danger: 4
Value: DV10
1 die: Damage*, De Corpore
2 dice: De Bello, De Societate, Hit Points, Ratio
3 dice: Sensibilitas
Hit Point: 20
Weapons: Spectral Weapons*
Protections: None

- *Special Abilities:* Stealthy
- *Magic Powers:* Immortality, Invulnerability (except fire and weapons consecrated against the Undead), Curse (2DV, the victim must *hear* Deceditus), Terror (2DV, the victim must *see* or *be touched* by Deceditus), Unnatural Speed

**The weapons of Deceditus are made of spectral matter and cut beyond shields and armor. A blow from one of these weapons ignores any Parry or Protection score from non-adamans armor and shields (see page 99).*

THE GRAVEYARD OF THE ANCIENTS

Somewhere in the heart of the country, deep under a black and intricate forest, is the "Graveyard of the Ancients", a vast and abandoned necropolis from before the beginning of the region's history, when not even Zalmoxis had covered the region with his dark shroud. This place was a forgotten corner of the world, where the elderly and the sick of the Dacians came to die, and where their dead, as well prisoners of war and those sentenced to death, were buried.

According to some of the darkest legends in the region, it is here that still to this day hides the most powerful vampire of the region, Mormolyce, and her court of Vrykolakas and Gelloi (see page 123). The Queen Under the Forest lies in the deepest recess of the earth, close to her beating heart, watched and worshiped by her spawn.

OLD DACIA

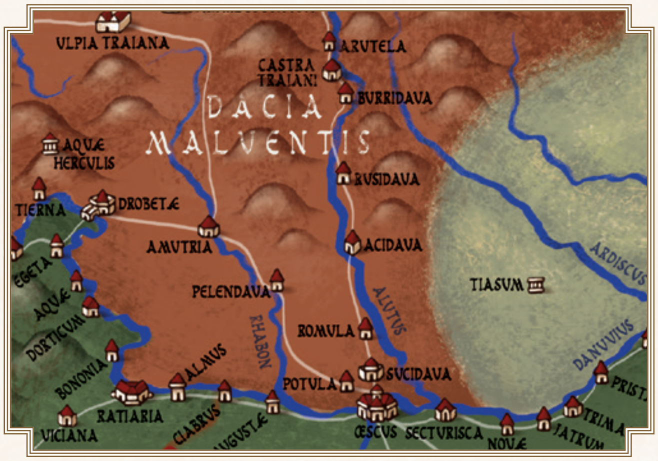
Dacia Malvensis is named after the lost city of Malva, an ancient and lost Dacian capital from the times of our Republic. It is also called "Old Dacia", believed to be the ancient cradle of their people.

This part of the country is the most exposed to the Goth and Hun threat, and in the past decades it was attacked multiple times, but it also faces Thracia and is guarded to the south by the course of the Danuvium. Traveled by the caravans of the Avars, tread upon by the feet of our troops and trader wagons, and sailed by the boats of merchants, the Malvensis is also famous for the great presence of Scholomancers, who seem to have their Schola Nigra in the ruins of Malva.

Here, perhaps in only one proper building or under a wandering council, train generations of the most promising youth or those marked by omens and prodigies which the old masters have gathered from the local population.

The new Scholomancers learn how to dominate the elements, how to face the terrors of the region, and any other mystery sacred to Zalmoxis. At the end of their studies, the one who has distinguished themselves the most among the survivors is chosen to become the main keeper of the lore until the next generation can repeat the process, while the others are free to roam the region and work their wonders.

Devotion for Zalmoxis and his priests, spread all over the province, here has infiltrated every aspect of everyday life, and there is no doubt that these lands are the most backward and superstitious of the whole region.



ROMULA, THE QUARTERS OF THE FIRST LEGION

Now that the location of Malva is lost, in the same general area stands Romula, present capital of the region, built and fortified during the conquest of Traianus. Since then it has housed troops from two different legions, in addition to a unit of proud Syrian archers. Between all the troops stationed in the country, the Legion Primigenia headquartered here is one of the most interesting for the Custodes. Its soldiers receive special training dedicated to fighting giant creatures, curses, and unnatural monsters, similar in principle to that of the Custodes, although much softer in comparison. This similarity in duties and the campaigns to which the legionaries are assigned in the Mare Barbaricum beyond the limes make them ideal companions for the Custodes, should they need support from soldiers well qualified to fight supernatural threats or the mysteries of the world. To Fortuna Primigenia, the deity who protects these men at arms, was dedicated the most important shrine in town, a direct emanation of that in Rome.

DROBETA, THE DOOR OF DACIA

With its sixty hectares of surface and fifty thousand inhabitants, Drobetae is the third greatest city in Dacia, after Ulpia Traiana and Apulum. It owes its importance to the great bridge on the Danuvium it was built around, and assists travelers to and from the province headed to or coming from Macedonia and Illyricum. Because of its importance, an entire cohort is always stationed in the area, garrisoned in town, or marching constantly from one side to the other of the almost mile-wide river. The "Mansio at the Bridge" is the most important gathering place in town, a station of post and trade that rises on the Dacian end of the bridge and offers lodging, fresh horses, customs, and other useful commodities. It is said it is managed by a senator who left Rome years ago and fell back on this private endeavor for "familial reasons" she never explained.

AMONG THE RANKS OF THE FIRST LEGION

The legionaries of the Primigenia are traditionally chosen from among the largest and toughest veterans of the surrounding provinces, especially those familiar with outdoor life. Many of them boast honors from previous campaigns and battles, surviving against barbarians and monsters.

Chosen Legionaries
Average Value: DV8
1 die: De Natura, Sensibilitas
2 dice: De Bello, De Corpore, Hit Points, Ratio
3 dice: De Corpore (Marching)
Hit Points: 16
Weapons: Ensis (Damage 8), Spear (Damage 6), Pugio (Damage 3)
Protections: Lorica Hamata (Protection 5), Clipeus (Parry +2)

Special Abilities: Formation - this ability activates if three or more Chosen Legionaries fight side by side and in the presence of a superior - a Custos can be counted as a superior if they pass a **De Societate** roll (DT 9).

Whatever it is, it cannot be denied that it is managed impeccably and precisely, earning its owner much silver every year.

Drobeta is also known for being a place where Dacians, Avars, Danuvians, and Romans have mingled perfectly from the very beginning of Roman domination, contributing to common prosperity and a free mixing of traditions.

Well built, rich in opportunities, and always busy are its docks, forum, and craftsman groups. Numerous are the shrines and temples, with a great basilica dedicated to the Christians, a temple to Mithras, and a shrine to the Anemoi, otherwise much more rare in other cities of the province.

SUCIDAVA AND THE FORTRESSES ON THE ALUTUS RIVER

With its more than four hundred miles of flow, and navigable for a long segment, the river Alutus is one of the largest of the province, and one of its main avenues of communication. Along its course, and the wide road that runs alongside it until the river enters the Danuvium, rise numerous towns, fortifications, and agricultural settlements, inhabited by Dacians and colonists.

Among the most important is Sucidava, not to be confused with the settlement of the same name in Moesia Inferior, rising where the two rivers meet and in correspondence to the bridge built by Constantine to unite that settlement with Oescus, on the Thracian side of the river.

Local superstition describes Sucidava as a relatively pleasant place, kissed by good fortune. Some legends speak of a secret underground spring, blessed by the goddesses of the earth, that flows below the city through natural caves and tunnels, and supposedly allows entering and leaving the town center, passing below its walls. Our scouts, however, have never found it.

The rest of the region is occupied by villages for the workers built the Dacian way, more or less isolated farms, and Imperial fortresses, small and large. It is an agricultural region, apparently cold but calm, where time flows following the cycle of seasons and superstitions are rooted in the millennia, where everything comes from the earth and to the earth returns. However, the peace is often broken by the horrors that suddenly emerge from the earth and the invaders from the northeast. Until now, our soldiers have managed to defeat these threats as they presented themselves, but they grow more frequent, and the winds of winter and war seem to blow ever stronger…

OLD DACIA - ENCOUNTERS TABLE

Roll 1d20 whenever deemed relevant. These encounters can happen in any season. Add 5 if the Custodes are far from a settlement (add 10 if traveling at night).

d20 Roll	Event
1-10	**Nothing of note.** Minerva be praised!
11	**The Aoidos.** Into town comes a skilled cantor from Moesia Superior, who knows numerous ancient traditions of Dacia and Thracia. He could be an invaluable source of information, if only the Custodes could work their way around his diffidence towards Imperial soldiers...
12	**A warrior of the Primigenia.** A veteran of the Legio Primigenia (see sidebar on page 37) is in town to recruit and relax. He started as an auxiliary, and through merits and endless triumphs was made an officer and then admitted with special orders into the ranks of the legion. The man is more skilled than the majority of the warriors the Custodes have ever dealt with, and to enter his confidence they need to pass a De Bello roll (DT 9), representing the physical prowess of the group and their knowledge of topics of interest to the veteran.
13	**Defixio in town.** A dark aura hangs around someone the Custodes meet during their sojourn. On a successful De Magia roll (DT 9), the Custodes realize that the person is under the effect of a *defixio* (curse) dedicated to Hecate (see also Encyclopaedia Arcana, page 211). Finding its source, removing the curse, and identifying the culprit is a secondary adventure that a group of Custodes can resolve within a day.
14	**Shrewd merchants.** Into town have come cunning and astute merchants from far away Florentia, in Etruria, scamming money out of every town with wits and silver tongues. Should a Custos intervene by playing their game and pass a De Societate roll (DT 9), they could turn the tables in front of everybody. To avoid being exposed, the four merchants will come to an agreement.
15	**Old currency.** Among coins handed them by some merchant, the Custodes find an ancient republican coin out of circulation. On a successful De Scientia roll (DT 9), it is identified as a victoriatus, with the writing "Roma" and the emblem of Victory. If the Custodes decide to make an amulet out of it or to honor a shrine with the ancient coin, they gain 2 Experience Points each.
16	**The strange flower.** The locals are plagued by strange ailments and hallucinogenic fevers. A successful De Natura roll (DT 9) allows recognition of their source as an infesting plant that is spreading about the city, a local variant of Hellebore (see also Encyclopaedia Arcana, page 173), *Helleborus ruber*, and its powerful toxins. The solution could be to simply pluck it from every corner of the town, but what if the local herbalists want to use it?
17	**Travelers from the south.** A group of Greek colonists from Macedonia is headed to the heart of Dacia looking for opportunities. They are shy and circumspect, but excited at the chance of starting anew in a better place, and can provide much information about the lands they come from.
18	**Travelers from the west.** A group of Daursi craftsmen comes from the west, fleeing the oppressive traditions of their people, into Moesia looking for opportunities. They are shy and circumspect, but excited at the chance of starting anew in a better place, and can provide much information about the lands they come from.
19	**Travelers from the east.** A group of Thracian exiles comes from Moesia, fleeing from invaders looking for opportunities. They are shy and circumspect, but excited at the chance of starting anew in a better place, and can provide much information about the lands they come from.
20	**Travelers from the north.** A group of Dacian peasants comes from the northern region, fleeing the oppressive traditions of their people, into Moesia looking for opportunities. They are shy and circumspect, but excited at the chance of starting anew in a better place, and can provide much information about the lands they come from.

d20 Roll	Event
21	**A message for Zalmoxis.** At sundown, the Custodes stumble into a procession of the faithful to Zalmoxis, about to send a message to their god, and with no intention of being disturbed. The priests jab three large javelins into the ground, pointing upwards, then the faithful throw the designated "messenger" onto the iron heads. If the messenger dies immediately, they are believed to see Zalmoxis and deliver the message; otherwise, it is a dark omen. On a successful De Magia roll (DT 9), the Custodes spying on the ritual can take their own readings and responses, but witnessing such a ceremony causes the loss of 1d6 Pietas (Ratio DT 6 to resist).
22	**Apprentice Scholomancer.** A young apprentice of the Schola Nigra wanders around the area and is simple enough to surround, capture, or follow without his realizing (Coordinatio or De Corpore DT 6). He has little to say, but if followed can lead the characters to the remains of the lost city of Malva. Here, though, there are a great many Scholomancers waiting...
23	**Scholomancer initiate.** A grim-faced and silent Scholomancer travels at night or between the shadows of the forests, a black shadow slipping through darkness. He has nothing in particular to do with the contubernium's mission, and it would be wise to avoid bothering him.
24	**Master Scholomancer.** The venerable grand master of the Schola Nigra, the most powerful servant of Zalmoxis, appears to the Custodes, curious about their mission and their presence in these lands. If attacked, he disappears in a lightning bolt from a black storm cloud and upon the region is unleashed a mighty thunderstorm (see following encounter).
25	**Thunderstorm.** A terrifying nightly thunderstorm rains heavily upon all the region. Not only must the group find shelter for the night, but at dawn nearby rivers overflow and the entire area becomes a mire.
26	**Hunted!** The Custodes are smelled during the night by a dark terror that lives in the woods of the region: an ancient and cunning Vampire, although weakened by its long slumber. The being would like to feed on such powerful people, but is wise enough to fear their blades and the flames of their torches, so it tries everything it can to weaken them with magic, only to attack one hour before dawn. If the fight proves too hard for the monster, it retreats back to its graveyard, taking the form of an impalpable mist.
27	**Black Goths.** A group of Goths moves about the night, weapons and skin darkened with black tallow. They are on a sapping and skirmish mission, and so attempt to attack the Custodes. Use the profile for Barbarian Warriors (1:1, + 1 Barbarian Champion, see Core Rulebook), including the favor of the demon Vassago which helps them move at night. They are almost invisible to the Custodes unless they possess a light source (the characters are considered *Blinded*, but the **Sensibilitas** roll has DT 6 instead of 9).
28	**Burning eyes, gelid fingers I.** The Custodes have made camp around the site of an ancient battle, haunted by the restless souls of hundreds of Dacian warriors. This is a battle that cannot be won, but escaping is easy enough, although in so doing the group spends the night on high alert, negating the benefits of rest.
29	**Burning eyes, gelid fingers II.** As *Burning eyes, gelid fingers I*, but this time the shade appearing is that of a sad maiden, starved to death centuries before. The Custodes are *Cursed* (DT 9) if they do not speak with her and attempt to alleviate her suffering. Listening to her tale until dawn without fleeing is the only way to give her peace. If they do so, the Custodes recover 1d3 Pietas.
30	**Burning eyes, gelid fingers III.** As *Burning eyes, gelid fingers I*, but this time there are (1:1) Riders of the Dead (see page 121), and fleeing is not possible.

PART II

REPORT
ON THE PROVINCE
OF THRACIA

GENERAL INFORMATION

continues from the confidential report of Flavius Artemius Longinus,
Magister of the Cohors Auxiliaria Arcana for the Provinces of Dacia and Thracia

If the first part of my report is about the grim province of Dacia and stresses its sinister atmosphere, indomitable nature, relentless mountains, rigid climate, and violent inhabitants, as well as the bloodthirsty beasts in its reaches, the horrors of its wild lands, and the terrors of its nights, this second scroll of mine, dedicated to Thracia, is about to look and sound much different.

Unlike the neighboring Dacia, Thracia is a land of airy landscapes, closer to the classic Greek culture, of ancient domination, and deeper Roman presence. Its land is much more open and gentle, the roads and bridges built by our engineers crossing its length and breath. The sun shines ever brighter, and the climate is temperate, although not as blessed by Apollo as sacred Italia. Its larger cities are welcoming, and the souls of its citizens and servants are always aimed at the Empire and the gods of Rome.

And yet, one cannot say there are no issues, or that its people lead a life without worry.

The main threat in Thracia is war, although the term "threat" seems hardly appropriate, as it alludes to the fear of something negative that may or may not happen. In Thracia, there is no doubt, no fear, no "threat"; war is our past, present, and - if the gods do not alter the skein of fate - future. This province has been for centuries a land where swords outnumber plows, where every year barbarian raiders from beyond the borders kill hundreds. Maintenance of fortresses and valleys is a high priority, with immediate consequences on the lives of its people. If the lands of Dacia, although fortified by our engineers, are protected by its wild nature and its tall mountains, the lower valley of the Danuvium is an ideal plain for the advance of the nomad riders who have always preferred these lands to attack.

The shadow of Zalmoxis is known in the province, as vampires dwell in the crypts of this earth as much as in nearby Dacia, and we cannot ignore either the rumors about the harpies infesting the peaks, nor the cyclopes hiding along its savage coasts. And yet, the names that make orphans cry and widows wail across the region are not those of Axivarna and Apletos, of Deceditus and Vassago, but those much more mundane, of Attila, Odoacer, Theodoric, and the hundred generals and warlords in their shadow. At the head of their endless throngs, these leaders swarm, ride, and sail day and night from Germania and Scythia to our pacified lands, craving loot. At their side crawl the Demons of their people, the shadows and spirits of their dead, the monsters and beasts they have tamed, and the sorcerers and shamans who foresaw their victories and curse their enemies. For these reasons, the Custodes, too, have their task cut out for them in Thracia, alongside legionaries, foederati, and auxiliaries of all kinds.

About the whims of the war fought today in these lands and right outside our border, Rome and the Emperor receive much more detailed reports than this one, so in this instance we will focus only on adding the most sinister elements from the current invasions, reminding you that all information contained in this report is the sum of reports from various sources, rumors, confidential hearsay, chronicles, and geographic descriptions of the province.

In this section, too, there will be a great deal of unverified rumors, myths, legends, and fragments of uncertain lore. To our future envoys will fall the task of investigating, confirming, or denying these reports, hoping they are only exaggerations.

Needless to say, I fear they are not.

GEOGRAPHY OF THRACIA

Founded by the Divus Claudius, the rich but dangerous province of Thracia ends to the east at the Pontus Euxinus, the Black Sea, to the north at the course and mouth of the Danuvium, to the south at the river Hebrus, and to the west at the Montes Rodopes and the chain of the Haemus, menacing peaks that pierce the heavens and host ancient gods and ruins of ancestral temples. Its border with Macedonia has shifted multiple times over the years after as many conflicts, while the Danubian limes has never moved. Thracia also includes Moesia Inferior and Superior and is mostly wind-swept plains, crisscrossed with numerous swift rivers and dotted with hills and impenetrable forests, more rare than in Dacia, but still present.

There are three main regions in the province, as well Byzantium and its lands, so vast and populous they make an effective fourth:

- **Moesia Inferior** is the northern region, exposed to the continued incursions and assaults of our enemies. These lands are today almost bereft of permanent settlements, other than those used by our troops and small landings along the coast. Such dangerous lands are protected by a tight network of camps, fortresses, and signal towers, while all the end of the Danuvium, where it is the border of the Empire, is watched over by the ships of the Classis Moesica, which provides support and supplies to the legions on the border.
- South of there is the ancient heart of **Thracia**, the one after which the entire province was named. The land is more fertile, overlooking the banks of the Pontus Euxinus, soaked with the noble Greek civilization that preceded us in these regions. Although so close to the front one could hear the clash of arms in battle, to the south and on the coasts of the Black Sea citizens live in poleis of Greek origin, quiet and wealthy, worthy examples of ancient architecture and classic science, made prosperous by maritime commerce with the more peaceful regions of the Pontus and the Aegean isles and cities.
- But if the Greek cities are beautiful and prosperous and boast the luxury and art of the ancients, the true jewel of the region is **Byzantium**, the “Second Rome”, capital of the province and second city of the Empire for size and importance. Through here, every day pass enormous amounts of goods that feed its enormous population. Here come the caravans and vessels of Asia and Armenia to find a rich market for gems, gold, furs, and amber from the east. Here arrive the travelers and explorers who gaze beyond the limes and imagine expeditions and deeds beyond the limits of the known world, to the dangerous north and the mysterious east of the world.
- The inner part of the province is **Moesia Superior**, a mountainous and wild region, similar to Dacia and rich in ore. Ancient Homer sung of the snow-capped peaks of this region, abode of choice of Borea, the wind of the north. Even this land is well fortified and watched, dotted with fortresses and raised roads, but not directly exposed to the barbarian hordes that manage to enter only rarely. Much like the neighboring Dacians, the local population is brash and proud, not yet rebellious but headstrong anyway, proud of their traditions and their rural and provincial life.

Much like Dacia, to each of the regions that make the province is assigned a paragraph in this first scroll of my report, where you can find more details.
Before delving in, however, I would like to give a general overview of the most important facts about Thracia as a whole.

REACHING AND ROAMING THRACIA

Due to its strategic position and the key relevance of Byzantium, coming from and going to Thracia is almost as easy as sailing from Ostia to Messina. From the ports of the Mediterranean, the routes to the strait of the Bosporus and the Golden Horn are well known to all sailors, and vessels headed to the Pontus Euxinus sail daily from numerous ports of the Empire. Even from the provinces of Asia, Achaia, Dacia, and Macedonia, land or barge traffic is constant, and the main trade routes are well-kept, busy, and watched, like the Egnatia.
For those who wish to go there from the heart of the Praefectura Occidentalis, the best choice is to dock on the eastern coast of the Adriaticum and then follow the course of the Danuvium, although it is necessary to pay careful attention to the most audacious raiders and join the fleet of Moesia in the last segment of the river.
Thracia and Byzantium especially are a carefully guarded door, although open, to the northern regions of the Pontus Euxinus and the mysterious lands beyond.

THE BLOOD OF TITANS AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD

According to the Aoidoi of Thracia and the seer-cantors of the Parade of Orpheus, before the origin of the world and the cosmos was the Night, eternal and immutable. It laid an egg, from which hatched the God of Light that they call Phanes. Out of the light of the son of Night, the shell of the egg, and the raw substance inside they made the matter of the world, giving life to infinite successions of beings and deities. The first kin of the latter were the Primordial Gods, who soon began siring haughty and arrogant scions and fighting on earth and sea, in the heavens, and below the ground.

Their descendants where the first to live in the desolate and mountainous lands of Thracia: the Titans, children of the sky and earth. Their ancient and abandoned homes are still visible all over the region, as well as beyond the borders of the province, from Caucasus to the Montes Rodopi. Thracians call them Houses of the Titans, today nothing more than ruins dating back to ancestral eras and made of rock formations fused together on the top of the mountains or in the depths of the darkest valleys around the steep Haemus. These imposing ruins, dug or melted into the rock rather than built, have inhuman geometries and proportions, and the locals stay well away from them as if they are the most terrifying place in all creation.

You surely remember what I told you earlier about Zalmoxis, in the paragraph dedicated to the beliefs of the Daci. The myth has a continuation set in Thracia. After fruitlessly attempting to devour the Black God from the sky and then dismembering him, starving and angered, the Titans summoned from the Underworld turned their wrath on Dionysus, who had tricked them. The God of Wine was chased to his homeland, Thracia, and eventually captured and devoured instead of Zalmoxis.

Furious for what had happened to his own son, Zeus cast his lightning bolts against the Titans, destroying them. From the ash and remains of the primordial colossi, mixed with the divine spark of Dionysus, were born men, part gods and part monsters.

The dire conclusion of this tale is supposed to have taken place, according to the Thracian myth, at the feet of the Montes Rodopes, where Thracia borders with Macedonia. There, on a rocky hill, stood once the City of the Titans, built with the same techniques as their dwellings scattered about the region.

That place is today cursed even worse than all the dwellings of the Titans combined, and the surrounding land is abandoned and unsettling, condemned by the gods thousands of years before the coming of man in those lands. Thracians call that place Hyperpyrakion, “the City of the Fire from Above” and avoid it any way they can, a silent testimony to that ancestral past.

According to Thracian legends, only a few escaped the destruction of the City of Titans, such as Iapetus and his children, who refused to follow their kind and attack Dionysus.

THE TITAN RUINS

Among the most savage and inaccessible mountains of Thracia, especially in Moesia Superior and the Montes Rodopes, are the remote and mysterious “rock formations” known as Dwellings of Titans. Those fearless explorers who climb those dark places with unintelligible architecture, as well as those who wish to wander the ruins of Hyperpyrakion, would most likely be struck by illness and unease.

To reach and explore such ruins, the group must pass a **Ratio** roll (DT 6) to not lose 1d6 Pietas to the eternal damnation that hangs there. In the case of prolonged exploring, one must roll again every day one passes there, although three consequent successes make the Custos immune until the end of the exploration.

Iapetus is the Titan holding the northern pillar of the Sky, as well as son of Uranus himself, father of Prometheus, Epimetheus, and other famous members of the Titan kin. According to local belief, it was one of the latter, Tyras, who gave life to the Thracians and the ancestors of their hundred kings, mixing with the daughters of the men born of the ashes of the other Titans.

TYRAS AND THE CITY OF THE SERPENT

At the dawn of time, in that Golden Age of which the poets sing, perhaps the fearless Thracians were one with the Dacians and Getae, Cimmerians, Sarmatians, and the innumerable clans of Asia and endless Scythia that extend to the edge of the world to the north and east of our Empire. In those endless years before the Trojan War, these people were considered to be the most numerous in the world after the Indians. They were said to dominate a quarter of the earth and had spread among the great primordial forests of Europa and Asia.

Tyras, their Titan forefather, was the brother of Prometheus, Epimetheus, Atlas, and other famous numinous beings who escaped the destruction of their first city, but unlike his better-known brethren, he stayed away from the war between the kin of Chronos and the Olympians.

Nomads, horse herders, and ferocious conquerors, but also rich and wise rulers when needed, Thracians learned from Tyras the secrets of civilization and architecture that he had saved from the destruction of Hyperpirakion, and with those gifts the Thracians built their sacred city centuries before the very foundation of Troy.

They called it Ophiussa, the City of the Serpent, in the swamps to the mouth of the river named after their first king, father and god, Tyras, to the north of the Danuvium.

Ophiussa coiled around a hill at the mouth of the Tyras, like a serpent protecting its eggs, surrounded by swamps and muddy rivers. A wide circular square occupied its center, and sinuous boulevards sprawled around it, within enormous walls and oval vaults. It was oriented to both the sea and the mainland, and its green stone buildings were visible from a long distance within the rot of the surrounding swamps.

The City of the Serpent of Tyras was sacred, inhabited only by the priests of their god and founding father, worshipers of the river and of the Serpent God Ophioneus, held to be a direct descendant and spawn of Phanes, and by the faithful there to honor the shrines with prayers, gifts, and sacrifices. It is said to have gathered throughout the centuries gold and treasure beyond count, as well as the attention of its bordering enemies.

There were no common dwellings or lodgings, but only cells for the cult and chambers for the faithful and the travelers there to pay homage to the priests or to Ophioneus himself.

Eventually, however, once more the events between the Titans and the gods interrupted those peaceful and prosperous centuries. As Tyras faded away and the Golden Age ended, two giants or Titans from the depths of Cimmeria, Gog and Magog, attacked and devastated the sacred Thracian capital. Ophiussa was destroyed and sacked, the colossal golden statue of Ophioneus cast to the bottom of the swamps of the Tyras, and the shrine and the royal palace torn down.

From that moment, the war against Gog and Magog and their Cimmerian minions went on for long years, laden with ruin, until all the ancient Titans and giants who sired those people were brought low and their children and followers scattered in all directions.

The last stand, that of the two colossi at the head of the Cimmerian hosts, was eventually crushed in Tauris, and the two primordial monsters trapped below the tall mountains of the peninsula. It is said they are still there, in the deepest recesses of the roots of the mountain, and that at night they shake its depths, growling as they attempt to break free.

THE SECRET OF STEEL

In the ancient silver age, the descendants of Tyras became a harsh and ruthless people, known for their determination in war, their rider hosts poised to slash the plains, the temper of their steel weapons, and their custom of feeding their steeds the flesh of their slaves, prisoners, and enemies.

In that dark and bloody age, when the world had fallen again into violence, might made right in the kingdoms of men, and civilization was but an unnatural byproduct of circumstances, soon to be vanquished by barbarism.

In the Thracian land settled then a population known as Calibi, sons of Vulcan, whose smiths claimed they knew the secrets of steel thanks to the teachings of their father and of the Titan Prometheus. They were the first to forge weapons with the iron from the sky, called adamans. It was they who armed the Titans for their battles, as Haphaestus and the Cyclopes armed the Olympians with bronze, and it would still be they, centuries later, to teach the Thracians how to make their deadly arms, the same ones they used against the Cimmerians.

In these ancient legends, the Thracians know it is impossible to tell fact from fiction, but many swear to have seen the last examples of adamans weapons from that lost age, kept in the treasure heaps of cunning antiquaries or still used in battle by noble scions. The terrifying Sword of War wielded by Attila himself is only the most famous of such powerful relics, but definitely not the only one out there.

The secrets of their forging were lost thousands of years ago, and yet still today every now and then they appear in ancient tombs of heroes or in the hoards of temples. These weapons... scythes, swords, and spear tips, are of extraordinary make and are said to be capable of wounding even the gods!

WAR AMONG HEROES

After the fall of Ophiussa and the wars against the Cimmeri, the Colchi, the Maeotians, and the other populations of those forgotten times, Thracians were divided into different clans and kingdoms, free to wander the lands of their ancestors, from the Montes Rodopes to the Danuvium, or gathered in small feuding cities.

In the years of the Trojan War, Thracia could claim a long lineage of heroes, warriors, and kings, worthy of the chronicles of historians and the verses of Aoidoi. The most famous among them was Rhesus, who Thracians still remember today as one of the bravest among their leaders. Rhesus was young and handsome, a lion in battle and a son of gods, like his relative Orpheus.

Summoned by King Priamus to help him against the Achaeans, Rhesus came to Troy on a chariot of gold to which were hitched prodigious white horses, a gift from Mars, and as valiant were his warriors.

Defeated by treachery and the will of the gods, as were all those who fought on the Trojan side, it seems Rhesus was killed, but his soul was not destined neither to Elysium nor Hades.

According to myth and witnesses, after being struck to death he was brought by his most loyal followers to a world of subterranean darkness, to be resuscitated and live there forever. He is still there, immortal, but confined to the bowels of the earth in such an alien domain, a god for his people and a king of that realm. The famous playwright Euripides wrote the following:

From here on,
dead to me he shall be,
no light for him to see. For be
where I am and his mother's face
see, he shall not. Of the silvered
land hidden in the dark reaches,
man and God he shall be, alive and buried.

The Scholars of the Cohors Arcana, interrogated on the likelihood of such a prodigy and the meaning of that myth, suggest that Rhesus was kin to the rulers of the Shadow Empire of which speak the Cimmerian legends, reported further in the document, or that on the brink of death he had imbibed the blood of the Nosphorati. Either of these deathly gifts, if not both, could have entailed his infernal resurrection or his rule on the ruins of lost Erebus.

Whatever this ancient myth means, it is reported by the scholar Dares Phrygius, author of the most ancient account of the Trojan War our academies know of, even older than famous Homer's, that a daughter of Rhesus took over the realm after the disappearance of her father and unified part of the numerous small local domains, laying the foundation for a common civilization. In more recent times, from the dynasty of Rhesus and Orpheus, resplendent and celebrated kings capable of spurring their troops in battle as well as singing exalted verses, came Eumolpus, prophet and cantor. It would have been he who founded the numerous sacred mysteries celebrated today in the whole region, dedicated to the Great Mother, the Kabeiroi, ancient protectors of the Thracian people, and even the forgotten rulers of the Shadow Empire: Axiokersos and Axiokersa. And it was so that, in the darkness of the most sacred and remote corners of Thracia, Achaia, and Samothrace, the cult and memory of those forgotten times carried on.

THE LAND OF A HUNDRED TRIBES

As mentioned previously, at the time of their most ancient historians and chroniclers, the Greeks believed the Thracians ruled over an enormous territory, to the north and east of the Aegean, as large as a whole quarter of the emerged lands. We do not know how much of that is exaggeration, imprecision, or truth, and yet scholars class the populations of that enormous land into roughly a hundred tribes: Odrisi, Bessi, Crobizi, Mysi, Getae, Triballi, Peoni, Istri, Daursi, and many others. In spite of their divisions, all these people were united under the name of Thracians, ready to visit the great shrines of Thracia and to obey their kings and Great Gods of the region. Even part of the Aegean was called at first Mare Thracicum, and the large shrine in Samothrace is an indirect testimony to the cult of the Great Gods the populations of the region worshiped. In that time between myth and history after the fall of Troy, they spoke a language of unknown and incomprehensible origin, without written form, which some scholars say comes from that of their ancient priests, from the times of Tyras and Ophiussa.

Whatever their home or tribes, these men were all well-armed, with spears, bows, daggers, and armor of leather. The kings and leaders, rich from the gold and silver mines of the country, often owned weapons and armor decorated with precious metals, gems, and rare stones.

The tribes were divided into smaller groups, villages, and families, but also into federations and alliances. The pastoral and fishing settlements were many, scattered over the whole region, along the coasts, and on the islands, and kings and lords ruled over their lands from stern fortresses built with logs and moats on thorny hills. Agriculture was greatly prized, and crafting was relegated to the lesser classes, while animal husbandry, hunting, fishing, plundering, and looting were the favored activities of the warriors, barely distinguishable from the raiders they fought... often their very neighboring tribes.

Due to their love for the hunt, in those years Thracians worshiped above all the deity Bendis Kotys, goddess of the dire bow, the savage lands, the night, and the moon. Unlike our own Diana, and Artemis of the Greeks, Bendis was bloodthirsty and destructive, also the patron of sorcery, violence, and massacre. She was also called "Goddess of the Twin Spears" or "Two-fanged One", dressed in fox skins and bearing a patera that was filled with the blood of the victims in the rituals dedicated to her.

I do not hide that many of us believe this ancient deity of the hunt and blood to be another aspect of the feared Abyzou, one of the Nosphorati who today are said to wander between Dacia and Thracia, or a being of similar nature that did so two thousand or so years ago... perhaps her equal, maybe her spawn, or even her progenitor.

To conclude this part about the Thracians from that arcane age, I

have heard this rumor that to me sounds meaningful. It is said that when an infant was born they mourned and held somber ceremonies, offering their sympathies to the family for all the misfortune life had in store for the newborn. At funerals, instead, they were happy and enthusiastic for the dead, whose suffering had ended and soon would have returned to the Great Mother.

WINDS OF CONQUEST

That world of savage and indomitable warriors, fragmented and in constant struggle, could do nothing against the advance of Macedonia during the fifth century AUC.

Profiting from the discord and rivalries between the Thracian kings, Philip II subdued the entire region and ruled like a Persian satrap, through local governors and tributes of gold and levies. It was he who founded Philippopolis and fortified the numerous ancient Thracian cities. The region then passed into the hands of Alexandros and his successors, and the peace granted by the Macedonian Empire was crushed at the end of the century, when the Galati invaded, devastating and conquering the region.

Wars continued for more than a century, until the interests of Rome brought its soldiers to these lands, cloaking it in civilization and peace.

In the last decades of the Republic, the Thracian kings became our loyal allies and clients, and the internal revolts were gradually quelled, rooting out rebellion anywhere in the country. The allies of Rome, however, did not lose their proud soul, neither did they forget the ancient rivalries, nor was the wealth of those years enough to make the country stable and safe. Called numerous times to keep the peace between the most headstrong tribes, our legions eventually marched on these lands in the first decades of the Empire and annexed Thracia once and for all, summoned by the local plebeians and patricians. Since then, this ancient and noble country has been our province, although the governors sent here did not alter many of its traditions and customs.

THE BIRTH OF BYZANTIUM

The Second Rome glorified by the Divus Constantine already had two thousand years of history under its belt when it became key to the chessboard of the Empire.

The foundation of Byzantium seems to harken back to before the Trojan War, when it was called Lygos, a Thracian fortified town built to control this strategically valuable area. Soon, alongside the first fortress, rose a fishing village, Semistra, and, on the Asian side of the strait, a Phoenician emporium. Being extremely beneficial to one another, they gave life to a florid triple settlement, and then a kingdom proper.

The city became a Greek colony soon after the foundation of Rome and kept growing. Where once was Lygos rose the Greek acropolis, the very place where centuries later Constantine would build his sacred Palace, Imperial residence, and heart of its political and social life to this day.

THE GOTHIC WARS

When, around the first millennium since the founding of Rome, died Alexander, last of the Severi, his successors proved inadequate and incapable of facing the countless issues of the Empire and the magical and mundane threats plaguing the provinces.

Such a generalized crisis drew the attention of our enemies and all the neighboring populations and kingdoms, as they reared their heads and formed unprecedented alliances.

To the north of Thracia and Dacia formed hostile coalitions, led by Vandals and Goths. The latter formed an alliance with the various tribes and began their unstoppable descent through Europa to Moesia Inferior. From there, they conquered many eastern lands of the Empire, sacked Thracia, destroyed ancient citadels such as Cabile and Tylis, and descended to Athens, only to be forced to retreat by the arrival of the armies from Byzantium.

After years of uncertainty, thanks to a secret faction of augurs and the support of the Custodes, the Divus Aurelianus became Emperor and consolidated again the legions and the senate, under the protection of the Sol Invictus cult. Restoring the *Pax Deorum*, he defeated the Gothic coalition and reestablished the Empire to the east.

It was during the campaign of Thracia, however, that a mysterious assassin managed to penetrate the Emperor's quarters and kill him. As you know, there is still much uncertainty around this ruthless murder, and the Custodes have never glimpsed new details. No augur could foresee it, no explorer ever found the tracks of the executioner, and no warrior or assassin could avenge him. The plot seems to have been orchestrated with expertise and the mystery of the death of Aurelianus in Thracia has yet to be solved.

With the Emperor of Sol Invictus dead, it was one of his worthiest successors, Valens, who defeated the Goths and pushed them back beyond the Danuvium.

The Rex Gothorum Atanarich took shelter across the border, between cursed mountains, and performed a complex ritual to infuse his armies with supernatural vigor. During the fight with their perfidious enemy, Valens and his armies were surrounded and cut to pieces by the barbarians' wrath and Gothic sorcery, who then swarmed around the province. Thracia was invaded again, this time by the claws and shadows of unnatural beasts, the sinister fruit of dark powers.

Albia Dominica, widow of Valens and powerful augur, took over and moved to Byzantium to avenge her husband and save the Empire. Thanks to her wise advisers and spies, expert in the arcane arts, the Empress defeated the Goth sorcerers and banished the influence of their Demons from the province. Once the situation was stabilized, Albia Dominica named Theodosius as her successor and retired among the Vestali, to pass the rest of her life in peace and contemplation.

THE SCOURGE OF THE GODS

In spite of the tumultuous past of these bordering regions, always exposed to the migrations and invasions of the barbarians from Germania and Scythia, and also considering Atanarich's devastating campaign, in the last century the winds of war have grown stronger and the threat to the borders turned extremely dangerous.

Around 1200 AUC, the scourge of these lands became the Huns of Attila, from the edge of the world, who crossed the Danuvium in a devastating assault and made their way to Thracia and Illyricum, even making their way to Byzantium. With an inextinguishable thirst for blood and an inhuman skill in battle, supported by the demonic cunning of their overlord and the barbarous rites of their priests, these raiders from countless tribes soon wrought destruction all over Asia and Europa, succeeding in the unlikely deed of overwhelming and terrorizing all at the same time Sarmatians, Germani, Goths, and Romans.

After five years of devastation, murder, and plunder, the troops of Magister Militum Flavius Aetius and his right-hand man Marcus Severus Maximianus, father of our own Emperor Theodomirus, repelled these screaming hordes back beyond the borders. The decisive battle happened around Philippopolis, where the Hun armies were at last defeated, at the cost of thousands of dead on both sides. The charge that won the battle was commanded by Maximianus, earning him the cognomen "Victor" and inaugurating a career of successes that would bring his family to the highest echelons of the Empire.

And yet, the massacre and the retreat of the Huns from Thracia was a bitter victory: tens of thousands, Roman and Thracian, had been killed during the five years of the invasion.

Attila himself, though beaten, was never captured, saved by his loyal Red Wolves, alongside his famous Sword of War.

THE DOMINICANAE

There are secrets in the Empire that are unknown even to the Emperor and the highest echelons of the Cohors Arcana. One of them is the Dominicanae, a sacred order in many ways similar to that of the Custodes, founded by the Empress Albia Dominica during her years among the Vestali. The Dominicanae, or Armatae Virgines, is a secret sisterhood of emissaries and priestesses, hidden among the Vestali and tasked with espionage, prophecy, sacred defense of the Empire, and the infiltration of the enemies of Rome. These devout and skilled women, consecrated to Vesta, watch the seven Pignora of the Empire, the Palladio, the Ancili, and other sacred relics, and use them to fight the supernatural enemies that besiege the Empire. Where the Custodes are trained mainly in investigation, combat, exploration, prophecy, and diplomacy, the Dominicanae are powerful exorcists and sorceresses, capable of using the sacred talismans entrusted to them and of unleashing the power of the secret Fire of Rome (see the Indigitamentum of Vesta Ignifera in the Core Rulebook). They move between the main cities and their temples of Vesta and Hestia scattered throughout the Empire, their identities kept secret under the guise of the priesthood, and are trained to survive in any situation.

Only the Vestali who live in the Atrium Vestae close to the shrine in Rome know the secrets of the Dominicanae, trained in the nearby House of Vesta, where they live with the elder former priestesses and the young novices.

However, when the August Empress is proven worthy, the Vestale Maxima can entrust her with the secret wanted by Albia Dominica, their second duty: protecting and advising the Empress and her daughters and being her eyes and ears across the Empire. Should she choose to reveal her rank and authority, this Armata Virgo wears white sacred clothes and can grace those sentenced to death. The number of the Dominicanae has never been more than a dozen between emissaries and auxiliaries. It is also said that their presence is known to the Assassins of the Cursus Interfectorius, both men and women, although they have always kept the secret.

Dominicanae
Average Value: DV8
1 die: De Bello, Hit Points
2 dice: De Bello (Daggers), De Corpore, De Societate, Ratio
3 dice: De Magia, Sensibilitas
Hit Points: 8
Weapons: Sica (Damage 4)
Protections: None

- *Special Abilities:* Acute Senses, Stealthy
- *Magic Powers:* Invulnerability (fire), Prophecy, Fiery Breath*, Fate Roll

**The Domincae are capable of channeling the power of the secret Fire of Vesta in an attack similar to the magic power Fiery Breath (the fire does not deal damage to allies).*

A CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

The momentary defeat of the horde of Attila at the gates of the Empire did not mean a reprieve for this unfortunate province. In the following years, it was the Goths who filled the void left by the Huns, and among their hundreds of chieftains and tens of kings emerged soon enough the brothers Valomir, Vodamir, and Vidimer, who had united their banners in the past under those of Attila. In the meantime, Rome was again in turmoil, as the young Emperor Valentinianus III, partially of Gothic origin, was killed by the stern general Flavius Aetius, causing another war. Realizing that the Roman-Gothic dynasty of Galla Placidia and Valentinianus would have never been accepted by the senators, the Gothic Kings led their men to the Danuvium, to plunder once again the rich cities of Thracia. Employing tactics and military secrets learned during the wars with the Huns, the Goths rose and resumed hostilities, crossing the river separating them from Moesia by the tens of thousands in a single night. As the civil war and that at the border were raging, the skillful Marcus Severus Maximianus, he who had defeated Attila, was proclaimed Emperor by the legions and set his barely seventeen year old son, Lucius Severus Theodomirus, our beloved Emperor, as his successor.

War resumed in Thracia, as violent as wild fire, and the three kings were pushed to the north by young Theodomirus, who also fought with the son of Attila, Dengizich, and Odoacer, chief of the of the Vandal confederation. In those long and extended campaigns, Theodomirus and his generals were successful in defeating the Gothic Kings and Dengizich and his horde and pushing back the Rex Vandalorum with famous and worthy victories, albeit temporarily.

Once Maximianus died, Theodomirus returned to Rome and was crowned Emperor, leaving Thracia an open front to the storm from the north.

THE RIDE OF THE NIGHTMARES

After the defeat of the three Gothic Kings, the successor of Vodamir, young Theodoric, the most skilled and clever of their leaders, was crowned the new Rex Gothorum by his people at arms. In the meantime, the other two sons of Attila, Ellach and Ernach, had taken over the Huns under the excuse of avenging the death of their brother Dengizich. In the meantime, the new Lords of the Horde demanded the obedience of Theodoric and Odoacer, but the two kings refused and took their distance from the Huns. The sons of Attila swore vengeance, although they needed solid victories to bring it to bear, and so chose to descend again on Thracia, aiming at Byzantium.

Many stories are told about the Ride of Nightmares, as that invasion is remembered. Our Custodes and scholars report that the Huns crossed the Danuvium on infernal steeds that fed on human flesh, like the ancient Thracian mares of legend, led by dark winds of tempest that blotted out the sun. The power behind Ellach and Ernach was terrible and unknown, and the augurs spoke of a Black Caesar, Lord of a Nightmare Horde who had risen to bring destruction on the Empire of the Living and crush under fiery hooves everything from Byzantium to Rome.

However, in spite of such an ancient and powerful evil riding with the Hun throngs, a contingent sallied forth from Byzantium and faced the screaming hordes head on. Among them were obviously our legions, but alongside the proud and frightened province army rose an auxiliary cohort of volunteers of unknown origin, led by a general called Basiliscus. At the head of his men, he nightly fended off the most dire and ferocious among the Horde's warriors and - it seems - fought their dark powers with similar arts.

Our armies and those of Basiliscus of Byzantium were victorious, surprise being the key to defeating Ellach and Ernach, who were dismembered alongside their servants by the wrath of the auxiliaries. In the ensuing bloodbath, the entire region was devastated, the monstrous mares of the Horde were torn to pieces, and no Hun has been said to be able to cross the Danuvium ever since.

Another enemy was bested, but the war is not over yet.

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

Much like Dacia, this digression on the history of Thracia and all information in the next chapter are reported so the Demiurge is aware of what the Custodes commonly know about the area. Accessing such knowledge in the majority of cases should not require rolls, as it is public domain. Any details should be discovered with **De Scientia** rolls, applying any appropriate Specialty. A character from Thracia lowers the difficulty by 1 for any roll about Thracian lore and anywhere else it is appropriate to add such feature. The Demiurge is free to improvise the most specific details of the history and geography of Thracia as they see fit, taking inspiration from history books, documentaries, films, and novels.

THRACIA - 1232 AUC

The present condition of the province is that of a country on the brink of war, a truth the population and army of Moesia and Thracia have lived with for more than a century, with barely any reprieve, and which is now sadly considered the norm.

The Prefect of Asia, **Tirtaios Nobilior**, lives in his palace on the promontory of Byzantium and is pressed day and night by the hundred enemies laying siege to his city.

To the north of the Danuvium, the Rex Vandalorum, the Rex Gothorum, and the last son of Attila, young prince Csaba, fight over impoverished and devastated lands, warring among themselves and pressing constantly on our borders.

No moon passes without a group of raiders, explorers, or routed barbarians being spotted to the south of the limes, and vigilance is kept constant, both in winter and summer.

In the last centuries, the cost in human lives of this broken earth has been steep. The ancient inhabitants of the region have been decimated by wars and raids, and many of them have left their ancestral lands to look for refuge in cities or serve in the legions and circuses, as valiant gladiators.

Only Moesia Superior, the most sheltered territory of the province, still has traditional settlements and descendants of the ancient Thracians, and it is there that old habits, legends, and lore have remained the most rooted.

Then, these regions were assigned to colonists, foederati, and allies of Rome, but they were driven back, massacred, or reunited with the ancient tribes and turned into enemies.

Byzantium itself, although a luxurious and prestigious capital, is

THE PREFECTUS OF ASIA

Tirtaios Nobilior
Value: DV8
1 die: De Bello, De Corpore, Hit Points, Sensibilitas
2 dice: De Scientia (Law, Literature), Ratio
3 dice: De Societate
Hit Points: 8
Weapons: Pugio (Damage 3)
Protections: None

Tirtaios is an old and cunning Athenian senator, a lover of luxury and protector of the arts as well as a fundamentally honest man of culture. More absent-minded than naive, he suspects there are a hundred and one secrets, plots, and horrors hiding in his prefecture, but has come a long time ago to the stoic belief that as long as a problem does not rear its ugly head it is not necessary to face it, as men cannot oppose all the evils of the world. He prefers to delegate rather than to deal in person with problematic situations, although he will always be willing to hear the Custodes if they come to him with clear, precise, and feasible requests.

also a heavily fortified outpost and all its citizen are aware that barely a few hundred miles to the north, on the northern shores of the Black Sea, the hordes of their enemies gather and look at the Golden Horn with greed and ancient, ever-growing hatred.

In town today coexist an incredible variety of people and religions: Greeks and Latins faithful to the Official Cult and the Great Gods, Jews, Essenes and Avars, Illyrians, easterners, Vandals, Sarmatians, Scythians, Dacians and Gothic worshipers of the exotic gods of their lands, renegade Huns, Asians who worship the sky and the souls of the world, and many others. There are also a great many worshipers of Christ, the famous Judaic prophet, members the Thiasos of the Orphics, the order of Abaris, and a hundred more doctrines never heard of anywhere else.

About the Christians, they come to Byzantium in ever greater numbers, attracted by the influence of the great families of their religion. Since the time of Constantine, the followers of the White Messiah have enjoyed the benefits that the Emperor granted them. Their numerous churches, competing with the Imperial in opulence and beauty, are the symbol of such privileged status.

All the most important matters of the Eastern Prefecture are seen in the Second Rome. The bureaucrats and the military of the city directly handle the operations of the numerous legions stationed in Dacia, Thracia, Asia, Armenia, and Mesopotamia, the defense of the dangerous northern limes, the development of maritime trade along the coasts of the Pontus Euxinus and the Mare Aegeum, the control of the main caravan roads connecting deserts of the far east to the shores of the Mare Nostrum, and the delicate diplomatic relations with the aggressive Persian Empire.

Shining in gold and expensive marble during the day, capable of obscuring the stars with its fires at night, Byzantium still today does not fear boasting its eastern nature, open to the most disparate cultures from the borders of the Empire, as if inviting every foreign people, peaceful or violent, to reach it, be inebriated with its prosperity, and attempt to conquer it, like an exotic orchid or a treacherous nepenthe.

The other trade cities of the province are rich and resplendent in their own way, as compared to the devastation and barbarism around them, although they live in constant terror of the Horde of the Black Caesar and the dark powers of the Goths, who pair their ruthless mastery war with dark practices and malignant beings.

Blinded by the splendor of Byzantium and gripped in the fear of future invasions, these settlements cannot rise from their perpetual crisis, from which there seems to be no way out.

THRACIA AT A WOLF'S PACE

The province is divided into Moesia Superior, Moesia Inferior, and a third area today thought to be Thracia proper, although many still consider only the first two regions.

Flavia Gallia Scholastica, De Praefecturae Imperii, Va 190-195.

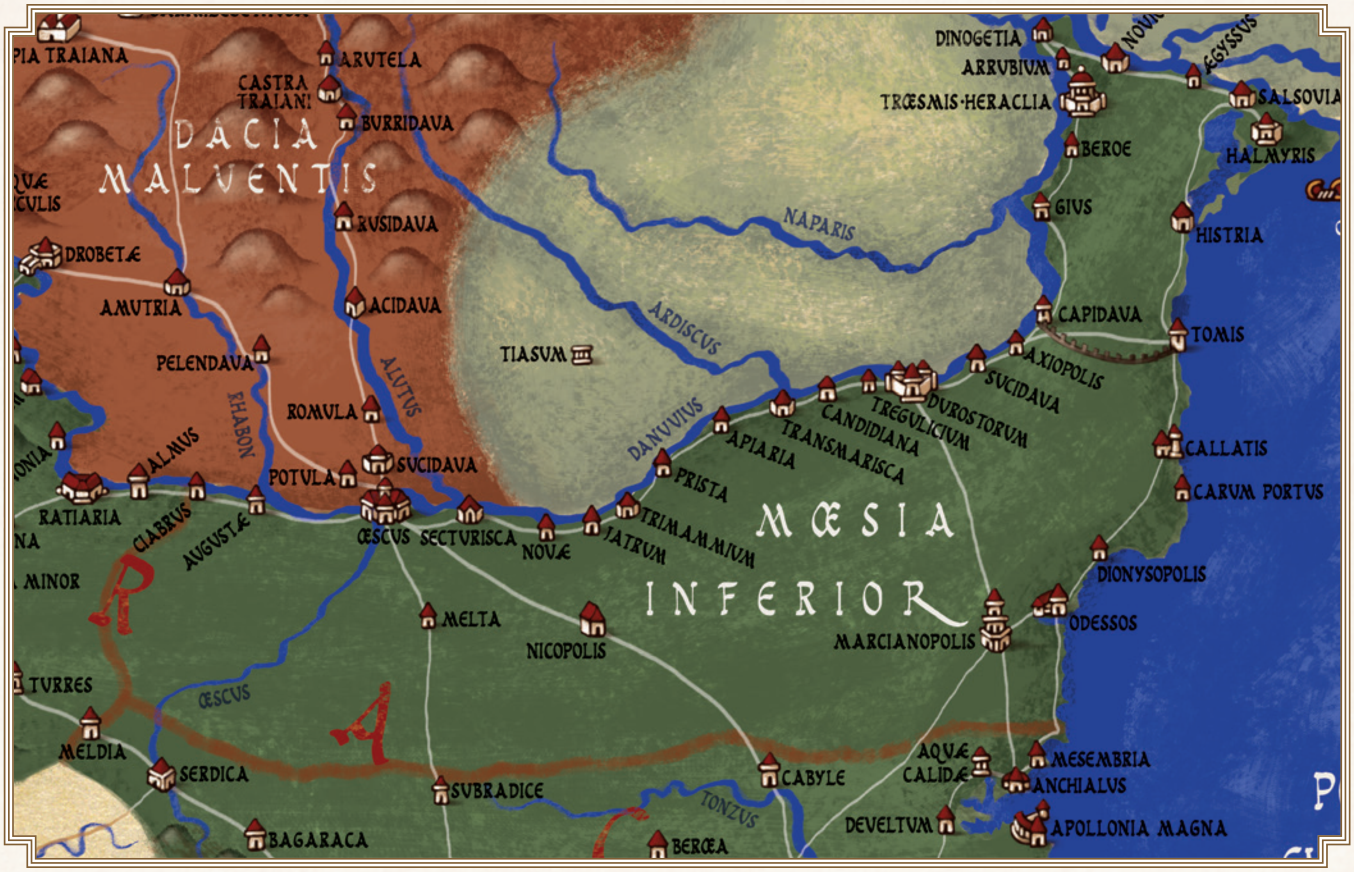
MOESIA INFERIOR, A WARRING REGION

The frontier of the Roman Empire most exposed to war and barbarian invasions today is the one passing along the course of the Danuvium, the great river that separates us from the endless and uncharted lands of the Scythians and the Sarmatians, and from the Mare Germanicum and the endless northern lands of the Hyperboreans.

As already said, Moesia Inferior was invaded first from the north and the coasts of the Pontus Euxinus, where presently land the raiders who avoid the limes and manage to pass through the fleet.

The gradual decadence of that region is a pain for the heart. Here once grazed countless herds of hundreds of the fastest and toughest horses in the world, used to running to exhaustion on these beautiful and vast plains.

The long-fortified road from Naissus, in Moesia Superior, follows the course of the Danuvium along its southern bank and makes the limes of earth of the region, the fortified border that defends Moesia and Thracia. This road is elevated on a well-made moat and garrisoned by tens of fortresses and hundreds of towers along its entire length, which connects Naissus to Heraclia.


PIA TRAIANA
ARUTELA
CASTRA TRAIANI
BURRIDAVA
DACIA MALVENTIS
RUSIDAVA
DROBETÆ
AMUTRIA
ACIDAVA
PELENDAVA
RHABON
ALUTUS
ROMULA
SUCIDAVA
POTULA
ALMUS
RATIARIA
CIABRUS
AUGUSTÆ
ŒSCUS
SECTURISCA
NOVÆ
TIASUM
ARDISCUS
NAPARIS
DANUVIUS
PRISTA
APIARIA
TRANSMARISCA
CANDIDIANA
TREGULICIUM
DUROSTORUM
SUCIDAVA
AXIOPOLIS
CAPIDAVA
TRIMAMMIUM
IATRUM
MŒSIA INFERIOR
MELTA
NICOPOLIS
MARCIANOPOLIS
DINOGETIA
ARRUBIUM
TRŒSMIS-HERACLIA
NOVIO
ÆGYSSUS
SALSOVIA
HALMYRIS
BEROE
GIUS
HISTRIA
TOMIS
CALLATIS
CARUM PORTUS
DIONYSOPOLIS
ODESSOS
MINOR
TURRES
ŒSCUS
MELDIA
SERDICA
SUBRADICE
CABYLE
AQUÆ CALIDÆ
MESEMBRIA
ANCHIALUS
DEVELTUM
APOLLONIA MAGNA
TONZUS
BERŒA
BAGARACA

Due to the constant threat and the impossibility of controlling the region and its common folk, the limes was cleared of farms and villages, and today its settlements are all castra, while along the roads from the south and Moesia Superior fortified supply lines are active. As such, there is not much to say about the once florid centers of Gabrus, Augustae, Novae, Jatrum, Trimammium, Prista, Tregulicium, Axiopolis, Capidava, and Beroe. These are all now keeps under martial law, in which our fearless centurions keep up with skill the bravery and morale of demotivated troops, who are terrified of seeing from the north the black tide of the Huns or being subject during the night to the spells of the Goths.

OESCUS, THE CROSSROADS OF THE NORTH

Oescus is a small settlement, garrisoned by soldiers and occupied by a small number of fishermen and farmers, tasked with sustaining the military and keeping in working order the long wooden bridge that connects Thracia with Sucidava, on the Dacian side of the Danuvium.

In addition to Dacia, the Danuvium, and the road of the Danubian limes, Oescus is well connected to Philippopolis and the Via Egnatia, making it one of the most important crossroads of Moesia and the entire province.

Because of its importance, the constant traffic on the bridge and the western road, and the presence of a large military force and a considerable part of the Danuvium fleet, this center has almost always remained beyond the western front of the land most struck by barbarian incursions, although the bridge and the town have been attacked multiple times in decades past.

The settlement, once numbering almost a hundred thousand people and administering a prosperous territory, is now diminished to an extremely fortified core, surrounded by dilapidated districts and farms, destroyed or burned villages, and roads and bridges covered in weeds, among which emerge bones and rusting blades.

Travelers who reach Oescus cross it quickly, wherever they come from, fearful of its heavy air and the general feeling of decay and stagnation. In spite of its strict martial law, smuggling plagues the town. All of the rationed goods have a florid black market in the ruins of the abandoned districts, while absent or forbidden wares are imported from Dacia, the south, or Moesia Superior and fetch a high price, sometimes bought and sold even by the legionaries and their officers. The military command is well aware of the situation, but conspicuously tolerates it, perhaps to keep the morale of the troops and the inhabitants at a tolerable level.

NOVAE, THE MOST TESTED BASTION

Novae is one of the settlements of major importance of the Danubian limes, a massive fortress made of concentric rings of walls, bastions, and moats.

If Oescus has always been just outside of the range of the barbarian raids and main invasions, the same cannot be said of Novae and Durostorum, right in the center of the raiding storm. When a few thousand nomad riders attacked, Novae was meant to protect the people of the surrounding areas with its colossal bastions.

THE HORSES OF THRACIA

The beauty and strength of the Thracian horses are known far and wide in the Empire. These valorous beasts are tough and resilient, hard to tame but steady and dependable once trained, one of the glories of the province. They are related to the divine mountain steeds of the Agathyrsi of Dacia (see page 109), the mighty horses of the steppe tamed by the Scythians and Huns, and even the nightmarish horses raised by the ancient Thracian kings.

Unlike the other regions of the Empire, warhorses are the norm here, and they are readily available to the Custodes, whether for purchase or requisition. They are Heavy Warhorses, but it is also possible to find Light Warhorses (see Core Rulebook).

Inside the local castra, well-kept stables are the norm, and **De Societate** rolls to find proper mounts often have a lower difficulty compared to other areas of the Empire (DT 6). Outside the castra, horse traders and tamers are rare, the majority of these animals being reserved to the army. However, war steeds are not too hard to find in the main settlements or through breeders, where the Custodes can purchase them for a price equal to the wage of a Custos for a month or requisition them simply by producing a *diploma.*

But when the king of the Goths and the Lords of the Horde came to teach us an exemplary lesson, or when the invasion forces numbered in the tens of thousands, Novae became the very symbol of the Empire, and as such was attacked and torn to rubble.

This tormented fortress has been devastated and put to the sword at least ten times in the course of the centuries, but command always had it rebuilt and returned to its function.

Being stationed at Novae is one of the most hated postings by the legionaries garrisoned in the province, and the surrounding lands are often wandered by deserters and traitors who prefer to hide or even pass over to the enemy rather than stay on that frozen bastion scythed by the cold northern winds, staring at the horizon and waiting for the enemy to arrive.

Novae is a gray and gloomy fortress, anguishing under the memory of endless death and surrounded by a grim settlement that all try to avoid. Along the road from Oescus to Durostorum span large cenotaphs and sepulchers, claimed to be haunted by anguished souls. There is no joy or beauty here, only tasks and military orders carried with terror in one's heart, constantly waiting for something terrible to come from the deserted plains beyond the northern shore of the Danuvium.

The only note of interest is a detachment of Thracian light cavalry auxiliaries, also tasked with handling war chariots. Their barracks and stables boast exceptional riders, guides, and athletes, as well as some of the best war steeds ever employed by the legions. These skilled and brave auxiliaries stand apart from the other military personnel and train in exclusive camps and at the temple of the Rider, one of the ancient gods of their people.

DUROSTORUM, BETWEEN THE GOTHS AND ROME

The citadel of Durostorum was one of the settlements given over the centuries to the Gothic foederati allowed to live within the territories of the Empire, when these populations were still allied to Rome and had promised to defend its borders from other invaders. When they then turned into enemies and many joined their new war leaders, the inhabitants of Durostorum reneged on the customs and alliances of the past and turned their backs on their own people, choosing to remain forever in the Empire. Today, those of Durostorum are the last Goths loyal to the Empire. The entire local population has converted to the Christian creed, and now the community recognizes the Bishop Monophilos as their ultimate authority. The settlement numbers roughly twenty thousand people and is the largest of the Danubian limes.

The Goths of Durostorum live in a productive and prosperous manner with the local garrison, giving them advice and practical help in the defense of the fortress. For example, many of the eldest, now devoted to the White Christ, know remedies and charms against the dark powers of the Goth sorcerers and the demon Vassago, who they consider one of the lords of their "Hell" and an enemy of their religion.

In town, the shrines to the gods of Rome coexist with a great Christian basilica and the residence of the bishop, who depends directly from the Christians of Byzantium.

Durostorum is ideal for Custodes who need information on the Goths, to find guides for the settlements beyond the Danuvium, and to learn how to fight the Demons and curses of Vassago. At the same time, this is a front-line fortress, a keep on the terrible Danubian limes, and the air breathed there is heavy with the martial rigor enforced by its rulers. Any trouble, meddling, or disorder is met with an exemplary punishment by the commanders of the garrison.

HERACLIA, THE LAST OUTPOST

The fortified citadel of Heraclia and the nearby fluvial and maritime harbors, Aegyssus and Halmyris, were for a long time the main arteries of the fertile region at the mouth of the Danuvium and overlooking the Pontus Euxinus, with great economic and strategic relevance.

Back then, Heraclia was called Troesmis and was a trade colony of the Getae and Thracians. Here Traianus won great victories and established one of his headquarters in the campaigns of Dacia, garrisoning for centuries the Legio V Macedonica. At the same time Aegyssus and Halmyris, both of prehistoric origin, were the base of the military and civilian fleets in the region.

But the Gothic Wars and the advance of the Horde changed things. After the region was completely devastated and the Legio V in numerous strategic maneuvers moved elsewhere, the three fortresses were repeatedly lost, destroyed, and conquered back, until they became the seat of an entirely new Legion, the II Herculia, and part of the reconstituted war fleet of the Danuvium.

The name of Troesmis was changed to Heraclia, in honor of the Temple of Hercules built there by the will of the legionaries.

Heraclia, alongside its harbors, is today key in the defensive system of the Empire, one of the headquarters of the defense against Goths, Vandals, and Huns, controlling access to the Danuvium, the Black Sea, and the limes of Moesia.

Among the little oddities this town can claim is a Circus that offers gladiator fights of great effect, in which often participate, whether willingly or not, Goths, Huns, and other barbarians captured on this side of the border, foreign fighters from the Black Sea, famous warriors of the Thracian school, and even Troglodytes, who still infest both sides of the Danuvium.

HISTRIA, THE RUINS ON THE BLACK SEA

The port city of Histria is more than a thousand years old, and was for a long time a florid harbor. Its inhabitants numbered in the tens of thousands, its piers were wide and well-guarded, the fishing settlements gravitating in its orbit were many, and the shrines to the Olympians gods, there since the times of the Greeks, were rich.

None of that saved it from destruction. After numerous sieges and attacks throughout the centuries, during Attila's last campaign in the region, Histria was sacked, looted, and burned, and all its people slain or captured, in a slaughter unworthy even of those godless heathens.

Since then, none has ever wanted to rebuild or repopulate that place, too close to the Danubian limes. The Via Pontica that once reached there from Byzantium, and on which traveled wagons and cattle, today crosses silent fields of ruins gradually being reclaimed by weeds.

The ancient temples lie desecrated and looted, exposed to the weather, and parts of the city have sunk a few feet below the sea. Where once children played and traders peddled their goods, now wander jackals, owls, and snakes. The abandoned city is also a perfect hiding place for deserters, enemy explorers, traitors, and even ferocious monsters looking for easy prey that nobody will ever look for or miss...

TOMIS, THE CITY OF THE BLOODTHIRSTY QUEEN

The port city of Tomis, unlike the neighboring Histria, has held its own for centuries against wars and invasions, and even against the cultural influence of Rome that would have it join the religious practices and customs of the Empire.

Tomis was founded a few centuries after Rome, after the victory of the Queen of the Messagetae, Tomyris, against Cyrus the Great and his troops.

The history of Tomyris is known from the chronicles. After keeping the Persians occupied for years against the eastern domains of the Empire, the troops of Tomyris, her son Spargapise, and the Messagetae, a Scythian people of superb riders, remained unbeaten.

THE TROGLODYTES OF MOESIA

The troglodyte presence on the shores of the last segment of the Danuvium is confirmed by the most ancient geographers of the region, including the famous Strabo. These communities of savages still live according to even more ancient customs than those of the barbarians and the Huns. They know neither agriculture nor metallurgy and live in caves and crags, always persecuted by the Thracians, as well as by the Scythians and the other barbarians beyond the border.

Only an ancient tribe of Scythia, today almost entirely lost and scattered beyond the border, seems to have peaceful trade relations with the troglodytes.

Since Moesia was devastated and many of its settlements brought low, the troglodytes have grown numerous, and many today live or wander between the ruins of the Thracian cities, where it is common to meet them or see them fleeing as silently as panthers.

A never-confirmed rumor, as interesting as it is terrible should it be true, is that they dug a secret way below the Danuvium that allows them to move at leisure through our borders. Should this rumor be true and we could capture this tunnel, we would obtain a great benefit in these times of war. Of course, it could also be turned into yet another weapon against us.

Troglodytes
Average Value: DV5
1 die: Ratio
2 dice: De Bello, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Corpore, De Natura, Hit Points
Hit Points: 15
Weapons: Spear (Damage 6), Sling (Damage 3)
Protections: None

Special Abilities: Net, Pack Tactics, Stealthy

***Chieftains** have DV6 and dress in the skins of wolves, bears, or bison as a sign of prestige (equivalent of a Corium Lorica, Protection 3).*

With a cunning ruse, the generals of Cyrus left an encampment scattered with hundreds of wine containers, to which the Messagetae were not as used as the Persians. The mysterious and inebriating drink left them too debilitated to fight, and so the Persians attacked, claiming a great victory and capturing Spargapise.

Out of shame, and to avoid to be used as a bargaining lever against his mother, the prince took his own life, and Tomyris personally led the vengeful assault against the Persians, killing in the ensuing battle Cyrus as well as his entire army.

Not content with all of that, Tomyris decapitated the king with her own hands, plunged the head in a vessel full of blood, and drank from it, "to sate her thirst for blood" as the chroniclers say.

Such bloodlust apparently never abated completely, and it is reported that she kept the skull of Cyrus, had its holes filled with gold, and used it ever after for her profane libations.

For unknown reasons, although some say they are connected to this victory and what the queen had become to obtain it, Tomyris led her people to Moesia and had them build a city on the Black Sea, close to those of the Thracians. Tomis is still there, and Tomyris is worshiped still with great honors, the queen mother of the city and her entire people.

The barbarous nature of these people never relented, and the official gods of our cult, our language, and even the customs and mannerisms of the Greeks, who lived in this region for more than a thousand years, are foreign and unwanted to them. In town they speak a mysterious and incomprehensible dialect of Scythia, very similar, it seems, to that of their Messagetae ancestors. The votive shrines and funerary rites are those of barbarian nomads from the plains, and it is said they still practice, in private, cannibalism.

The invasions of Attila and his sons have always spared Tomis, and even the Horde of Nightmares stayed well clear, as if honoring ancient and secret pacts, although we never had reason to suspect the Messagetae ever helped the Huns. Perhaps the Queen Mother, considered a deity for centuries, still watches over the city or emerges as a miasma from its dungeons...

The people of Tomis look serene and agreeable. Everything under the light of the sun is done according to our laws and the will of the Empire. The town features a well-garrisoned Roman fort that watches over the last section of the great wall that reaches the Black Sea from the city of Axiopolis, along the Danuvium and the great fortified road.

Here it is possible, for explorers and travelers leaving for Scythia, to find information, guides, excellent local mounts, weapons, and proper supplies, as well as a florid market of relics and ancient artifacts from the north. The majority of the expeditions delving deep into the lands of the ancient Cimmerians to plunder their tombs leave from and return to here.

However, beneath such appearances of wealth, safety, and prosperity, many of us suspect the nights of Tomis are full of blood-soaked and horrible secrets. Corpse eaters hide all over the city. The Gelloi seem to be familiar with this place, and when these monsters are present their dark masters must not be far.

Nothing seems to have changed here for centuries, and the poet Ovidius, exiled here, reported, *"A city in the heart of land devastated by war, at the most remote corner of the Empire."*

NICOPOLIS, THE HORRID FACE OF WAR

Nicopolis was the richest and most prosperous city of Moesia Inferior. It had three aqueducts, thermae, temples, theaters, a wonderful agorà, vast basilicas, and an imposing shrine to the Great Gods of the Thracians. Endless fields, orchards, and vineyards surrounded it, and the cattle brought to its slaughterhouses every day formed a queue that reached the city gates. Its merchants managed fortunes, and its patricians decided the politics of the whole of Moesia, dealing directly with Emperors.

But Nicopolis was on the path of Attila. And Nicopolis was wiped off the maps, thirty or so years ago.

Its tribute of iron to the Roman legions was not enough. Its tribute of gold and silver to the Huns was not enough. Attila wanted another, more vital, tribute piled on top of the precious metals: blood. And Nicopolis fell, its inhabitants cut to pieces or enslaved, the entire city turned into a Hun camp.

When the invaders were pushed back, there was nothing left to rebuild. The city had been burned, its walls torn down, and the fields, vineyards, and orchards could not even grow grass.

Nicopolis is still there, yes, but it is a dead city. Not even the legends about it survived. No specters roam its rubble, no Gelloi, no walking dead. Harpies do not nest there, vampires do not hide there, sorcery does not make it dark and ominous at sundown. It is just a husk of a city, an eternal testimony to the futility of war, the wrath of the masses, and the fleeting nature of the human affairs, for centuries to come.

THE CITIES OF GOLD

Together known as the Pentapolis of the Black Sea, these five cities - Callatis, Marcianopolis, Dionysopolis, Odessos, and Mesembria - share an ancient past, at times even harkening back to the dawn of time. These cities were all colonized by the Greeks, and then peacefully conquered by the Romans, under whose rule they have prospered for centuries. Threatened and often harshly struck by war, these coastal cities are on the border between Moesia and Thracia proper, almost on the coast.

Here, Thracian origins are long forgotten, and the atmosphere is Greek, though far from the hot shores of the Mare Aegeum. Rich veins of gold run along the courses of the rivers, and mints and local currencies provide a great abundance and local diffusion of the solar metal in quantities, while not comparable to those of Dacia or other rich provinces, enough to bring wealth to the local merchants.

In this region, tomb robbers and antiquaries are very active. Much like the lands of the Sarmatians and of the Sacians, this region is rich in ancient tombs, dating back to the lost ages of Erebus or the age of the Cimmerians. However, centuries of plunder and research have exhausted such easy treasure, and now all the adventurers of the region and those from foreign regions, Greeks, Romans, Thracians, Dacians, and barbarians, are gradually moving to Tomis, where they organize expeditions into the sepulchers of Scythia, Tauris, Colchis, and Cimmeria.

A WARRING REGION - ENCOUNTERS TABLE

Roll 1d20 whenever deemed relevant. These encounters can happen both during the day and night.
Add 5 if the Custodes are far from a settlement (add 10 if traveling at night).

d20 Roll	Event
1-10	**Nothing of note.** The day is lovely, and nothing particular happens. Praise Nemesis!
11	**The flower peddler.** A young Thracian girl sells flowers and mushrooms at a negligible price. She seems to be well stocked and to know well herbalism and the secrets of the potions and the plants of the region. The girl sells all manner of essences and raw resources (see also *Liber Medicamentorum* on page 162 of the Encyclopaedia Arcana), and even takes requests for poisons and special compounds, paid up front, of course.
12	**Unrest.** A procession of angered workmen and plebeians stops in front of the soldiers and the palaces of power, demanding Byzantium send more legionaries and bolster the defenses before the enemy arrives... Many have seen small contingents of foreigners raid just outside the city, and fear is increasing.
13	**Pancratium tournament.** Some gladiators belonging to the Thracian Covenant of Spartacus are organizing independent games dedicated to their patron Nemesis, a traveling show that is having great success in numerous cities. They feature Pancratium fights, a style of brawling, not too violent and rather acrobatic. Although it is not possible to bet, there is a substantial price to spectate. On a successful Sensibilitas roll (DT 6), it is easy to realize that the fights are choreographed to extensive detail, but all those who have realized seem to have fun, nonetheless. The gladiators accept some intervention of the public, but only if they play into their game.
14	**The assistant of the Cappadocian.** A dealer in mysterious artifacts, ancient items, and Scythian and Cimmerian relics wanders these lands, doing good business with local tomb robbers. He seems to be the agent of a wealthy merchant from Alexandria, interested in expanding his collection with funerary artifacts from the local area.
15	**Boisterous adventurers.** A small group of rascals wanders the area, apparently a band of treasure hunters dedicated to the plundering of Cimmerian tombs, up in the north. They seem to have a promising map and are about to leave for their next expedition.
16	**The wrath of Nemesis.** The effigy of Nemesis outside of a small shrine to the goddess cracks just as the Custodes pass, and the scales it bore shatter to the ground. An appropriate ritual could interpret such an obvious omen. A grave and blasphemous injustice has just been committed nearby. Additional Degrees of Success can add more precise details.
17	**Angry horse.** A horse as mighty and swift as the wind breaks free of the bridle of a seller and escapes, trampling anything in his path. Should the Custodes try to capture and stop him, they realize he is an Agathyrsi mountain steed (see page 109), requiring a much harder than anticipated De Natura roll (DT 12).
18	**The lonely Amazon.** A young Amazon travels alone through lands and camps, headed to Byzantium. She is determined to complete her mission, but she does not intend to reveal it to anybody who does not prove to be her friend and help her. A De Societate roll (DT 9) will reveal that the warrior girl bears a message from her queen to the “King of the Romans”, asking for his help against the enemies of her people.
19	**The gang.** A gang of smugglers, cutpurses, and fences works nearby. They are numerous, expert, and well-armed... and are legionaries! They have been using their connections and training to do what they want in the settlement. If the Custodes want to face them openly, they must find enough evidence of their crimes; otherwise, the local command will protect them. Use the profile for Legionaries (1.5:1, + 1 Centurion, see Core Rulebook).
20	**Gelloi.** An overturned wagon and unsettling human remains tell the story of an attack of horrid creatures at the expense of innocent traders. Tracking the creatures for numerous hours, the contubernium finds a group of repugnant Gelloi (1:1, see page 123) hiding among the rubble of an old watchtower. The abject creatures attempt to escape first, but if left with no other alternative will fight to the death.

d20 Roll	Event
21	**The Rider.** A figure on a horse observes the group from afar, advancing slowly between the hills at sundown. They raise their hand in greeting and blessing. If the Custodes answer, they feel infused for a fleeting moment with an ancient and luminous serenity that reminds them of the wind between the grass, galloping hooves, and the taste of freedom. It is the blessing of the Thracian Rider! They recover 1d3 Pietas and every character is considered "Thracian" if they wish to learn and use the Indigitamentum of the Thracian Rider (see page 105). If, instead, the Custodes try to chase him, the Rider will always be ahead of them, and any openly hostile action is met with a *Curse*.
22	**Cavemen.** A Troglodyte (see page 54) family hides nearby, between the ruins of an abandoned city and the hills where they hunt. They are men (1:1), women (1.5: 1, DV4), and young (2:1, DV3). Depending on the composition of the family, they are more aggressive, cautious, or willing to cooperate to be left alone. Any roll to interact with them is De Natura instead of De Societate.
23	**Spear tip.** The remains of an ancient battle emerge from the earth. If the Custodes spend time looking through the bones and rusted weapons, on a successful De Scientia roll (DT 9), they recognize a well-preserved adamans spear tip in the chest of a barbarian warrior. Should the Custodes not bother to perform worthy funerary rites or destroy the corpse, that night a Silent Warrior attacks them at their camp.
24	**Gothic mercenaries.** A group of Gothic warriors has crossed the border and carefully marches to the south. They are mercenaries with a letter of free passage through the limes and are authorized to reach Byzantium looking for work, but still move with caution, as they do not wish to intimidate the population. Use the profile for Barbarian Warriors (2:1, + 1 Champion, see Core Rulebook).
25	**A bivouac of legionaries.** A group of legionaries and their decurion have arranged for a couple of days on the top of a windy hill, waiting to move again to the castra to which they were assigned. They are an easygoing and resourceful bunch, and know many secrets, trails, and shelters of the local area.
26	**Clashing weapons.** Between midnight and the first light of dawn, a distant sound of battle comes from a secondary vale. If they investigate, the Custodes witness an unsettling scene of reanimated corpses fighting with each other for hours. They are what is left of two armies who fought countless years ago, Romans and Goths, kept fighting by barbarous sorcery even after death. They stop only if someone finds a way to break their curse and give them a worthy burial.
27	**The Strix.** A Strix, a servant of Abyzou and hierarch of the Sons of Caligula (see page 94), is spying on the Custodes. She does not intend to attack, but on a successful Sensibilitas roll (DT 9), it is possible to notice her and understand her nature. If attacked, she takes human form and fights back.
28	**Jackals.** The plains of this land are plagued by packs of wild dogs, lanky wolves, and jackals from the north. A particularly large pack has set its eyes on the Custodes. Use the profile for Wolves (2:1, + 1 Pack Leader, see Core Rulebook).
29	**Hooves in the night.** Far-away neighing catches the attention of the Custodes. If they investigate, the characters discover a small herd of horses who run and bump into each other in the night. If they draw closer and do not realize what they are, the Custodes realize they have found Nightmare Steeds (1:1, see page 113). The monstrous animals charge the group and fight until at least half of them are slain or tamed.
30	**Leech!** A horrid monster is on the trail of the Custodes: a Vampire of the kin of Chomodracaena, a disgusting Hirudo (see page 123). Vile and abject creature that it is, after a long time spent spying on the group it might choose not to attack, instead observing the characters until up until an hour before dawn.

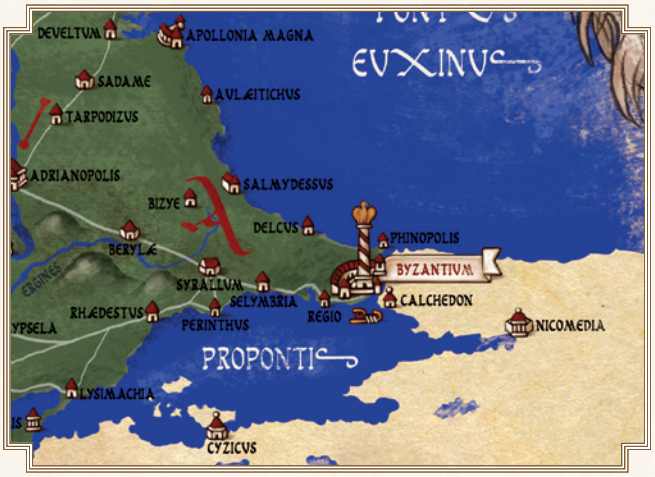
THRACIA, A LAND OF LIGHT AND SHADOWS

From Apollonia to Byzantium, the coast of the Black Sea becomes mostly rocky, with rough sea and no shelter. Save for Salmydessus and a few other landing spots that make navigation somewhat easier but still quite complex, there are no relevant settlements, and most of the smaller ones have been raided often in the past.

In peacetime, this region is gentle and pleasant, abundant in farmland, cultural settlements, and trade. Vast orchards cover its surface, as well as pastures capable of sustaining endless herds. And many more are the vineyards, the tilled fields, and the olive groves, while its woods are rich in game and its harbors profitable for the fishing boats that dock there every day. As in nearby Achaia, Greek is the most common language, and the currency and religion follow mostly the Greek tradition. Many still speak ancient Thracian, however, and follow the ancestral cults of their land: those of the Rider, the Great Gods, and the Kabeiroi. Alongside the stone and marble shrines of the great cities, there are plenty of sacred springs and groves, rough mountain altars, and shrines scattered anywhere, dedicated to Nemesis, Hecate, and Bendis Kotys.

The major settlements of Thracia are those along the great inland trade roads and the last segments of the Via Egnatia that link Serdica, Philippopolis, Hadrianopolis, and Byzanthium with Perinthus, Thessalonica, and the Adriaticum. A well-made coastal road follows the Pontus Euxinus to the north to the furthest border of the province, the mouth of the Danuvium. These last miles are traveled often by merchants and travelers and are heavily patrolled, although the danger of brigands or foreign raiders is still present.

On this harsh and rocky coast, dotted with caves and crags, seem to hide the last cyclopes on this side of the Black Sea, constantly harassed by the spears of our soldiers so that they move to less-inhabited areas.



APOLLONIA MAGNA, THE SUN HARBOR

The coastal city of Apollonia is the most florid in Thracia, and the wealthiest in maritime trade after Byzantium, as well as the first harbor of some relevance north of the Second Rome. It is said that when founding the colony, the Greeks, desperate to find a valid landing point along such a harsh coast to the north of the strait, paid a large sum to a group of Phoenician traders who knew the Pontus Euxinus well enough to direct them to a fitting place for their colony and were pointed to where today stands the city.

The harbor was immediately consecrated to the Sun God Apollo, and a ten-man-tall statue was erected in the shrine to the deity, the largest in town. Brought to Rome as a war trophy a century ago, the local consuls had a new golden simulacrum of the god placed, even taller than the previous one and oriented to face the rising sun.

In the shadow of the enormous statue sits the Thracian Sibyl, to us unknown in more ancient times, and as such not included in the list of the Sibyls of Varro. Today she is one of best-known oracles of the prefecture, and it is said that her every word is inspired by the god.

Around the shrine to Apollo developed a great sanatorium and a medical academy of great importance, connected to vast and bountiful gardens of medicinal herbs. The care administered here is for both physical and spiritual ailments, through therapeutic and prophetic slumber and other secret practices.

Apollonia Magna profited from its proximity to Byzantium as its main satellite city and was never destroyed by the barbarians. The size of its harbor and its importance along the road to Byzantium made it an alluring target, but the support of the Danuvium fleet of the Sea fleet and the blessing of Apollo so far have been successful in defending the Harbor of the Sun from major devastation.

SALMYDESSUS, MOTHER OF SHIPS

To the south of Apollonia and the north of Byzantium is a steep cliff made of rocks and shallows, extremely dangerous for navigation. The inland is a rocky desert, and the whole land is completely exposed to the northern winds. In this tens-of-miles span, there are neither safe landing spots (save a handful of small landfalls known only to the local helmsmen) nor coastal villages other than Salmydessus.

This settlement has always enjoyed a dark fame. In the past, it was the home of the most ruthless pirates, pillagers, and ship sinkers in the region, so numerous and warlike they had divided the coast among themselves to avoid indiscriminate sacking and endless feuding between rival gangs. The governors have always painted them as savage and inhuman, and we fear such ruthlessness comes not only from their isolation along the coast, but also from some bloodthirsty patron that has ruled them for a long time.

In more recent times, the plague of the ship sinkers was partially eradicated, but the locals are still known for being treacherous and prone to the worst barbarism, and the doubts about their affiliation to unnatural powers attracts more suspicions and evidence as time passes.

In spite of the improvements of the last decades, here the coast is still "hostile to sailors, mother of ships".

THE SECRETS OF APOLLONIA

A visit to Apollonia can benefit the Custodes in numerous ways. Although knowing no great secrets of the past, the priests of the shrine do know special remedies for the failings of body and soul, and the Sibyl can provide useful suggestions and oracles. Here, not only here is it possible to be healed of any ailment, but the physicians and teachers of the shrine are also always willing to share some of their knowledge with the Custodes.

If the Custodes spend numerous days studying under the scholars of Apollonia Magna and pass an **Ingenium** roll (DT 6), they can diminish the cost of their next level in the Specialties of De Magia (all) and De Scientia (Philosophy, Medicine) by 10 Curriculum Points per Degree of Success.

The masters of the shrine have much lore on Vampires and the Gelloi of Thracia, the Sons of Caligula, and the dark schemes woven in Salmydessus, Tomis, and Byzantium by the Nosphorati and their spawn.

For centuries, they have guarded the secrets of the construction of an ancient artifact that can be useful against such beings: the Solar Mirror.

Solar Mirror. This artifact of gold consecrated to Apollo wields two of the most dangerous things to the spawn of Lilith: their reflection and sunlight. By binding special *daimones*, Solar Mirrors can store sunlight and are capable of showing the true nature of these dark creatures, inflicting on them heinous damage, as if they were exposed to the sun, even in the dead of night or in their crypts (2d6 points of damage each tempus they are exposed to the light, up to 3 tempus per day). Encumbrance 2.

Also, the blessed priests of Apollo can teach the Custodes special prayers to the sun, *teknès* useful to resist some of the spiritual powers of the Vampires. One of such Indigitamenta is that of Apollo Phoebus (see page 104).

Adversus: Vampires. Thanks to the teachings of Apollonia, when they must fight against the magic powers of Vampires, a Custos can add 3 to the results of their **Ratio** rolls.

Another peculiar side to Salmydessus is the unusual fishing practices of the locals, as they hunt the great leviathans of the sea that come into the Black Sea from the Mediterranean. Along the coast, beyond the homes and shacks of the fishermen of more common species, are the larger and more imposing buildings of the whalers. Those boats are ten times larger, and every day bring back to the shores these immense creatures, prized for their meat, oils, and fat. Sometimes, these fishing establishments plague the city with the stench of the carcasses and their fermenting innards, and along the beach one can see a great many enormous skeletons.

Salmydessus is also one of the suspected places of infiltration from the Sons of Caligula, a sect of conspirators that has members all over the Empire, but here in Dacia and Thracia seems to count its main bases, especially in Apollonia and Byzantium.

THE SONS OF CALIGULA AND SALMYDESSUS

Salmydessus is the center of fishing in the Black Sea mentioned in the adventure *The Sons of Caligula*, on page 91 of *Mysteries of the Empire, Volume I*. If the players have not yet gone through that adventure, that content could be the reason why the Custodes move to Thracia. The Demiurge can use it as a hook to travel to these lands and a first mission to carry out. In that case, it is possible to make matters more complex by adding details on the political and military conditions of Thracia and the cult of the Blood Gods that is followed here so commonly. In addition, the red trail of blood of the cult and the spreading of vampirism in these lands could be investigated after the defeat of the main antagonist of the adventure. After all, the Sons of Caligula are nothing compared to the ancient Vampires and the last Blood Gods that still hide in this province.

If the players have already faced that mission, they can resume following the aftermath of that scenario, searching for further traces of the cult both in Salmydessus and Byzantium. In particular, the three whaling establishments of Salmydessus and a good portion of its citizens are part of the cult, which has an even more solid and pervasive base among the streets and palaces of the capital of the prefecture. On page 91 is additional information on the Sons of Caligula.

ADRIANOPOLIS, AMONG THE FORGE MASTERS

The last leg of the Via Pontica before reaching Byzantium is the beautiful and rich Adrianopolis, the most important of the cities founded by the Divus Emperor it was named after.

Adrianopolis was, like the majority of the other settlements I have mentioned so far and will further into the report, a capital of the Thracians where they had their kings and palaces.

Adrianus chose ancient Uscudama for its position, the confluence of the rivers Tonzus and Hebrus, where the latter becomes navigable and runs to the south, to the Aegeum. The countryside around Adrianopolis is vast and bountiful, but the city is also known for its craftsmen, smiths, tinkers, iron workers, and weapon makers, numerous and gifted with an admirable spirit of unity. The corporations to which they belong bind them to a great many daily tasks, public and private, and it seems, many secrets and mysteries of the ancient artisans of their people. Not only do they fight in battle as a special auxiliary unit, wielding the best and most ancient weapons, guarded for generations by their families or in the seats of their corporations, but it is also said that they guard the secrets of the sorcerer-smiths of the past, of the Calibi and the Kabeiroi. They know how to banish spirits with salts and iron filings, and could know *teknés* useful against many legendary creatures of these lands, as well as being perhaps the last to know the secrets of the steel of the Titans.

PHILIPPOPOLIS, "THE FAIREST OF ALL CITIES"

With such a moniker attached to it centuries ago by the poet Lucianus, it seems that back in its day it was the largest of all the cities of the region, larger than Byzantium itself.

The scholars say that, according to their studies, the first local Thracian settlements date to thousands of years before the foundation of Rome, and that this would be the cradle of their people, as well as the seat of the mightiest of their kings in the legendary days before the birth of history. Back then, the city was known as Eumolpias, and it was already famous for its beauty and grace. Here rose ancestral temples dedicated to the Great Gods and the Muses, and between its theaters and academies still today gather and worship the best musicians of the province. It is said that this was also the city of origin of Orpheus, and the Thiasos of his last followers appears to have its main seat here.

Struck by the invasions of the barbarians and centuries of campaigns, Philippopolis has somehow survived numerous attempts to destroy it, and yet a gloomy pall of fright hangs upon the city, and we suspect that, among other things, this is the ancestral home of Axivarna, the vampire that haunted the nights of Ulpia Traiana last winter. Or, at least, the trail of its horrible misdeeds leads to this place, and here stops.

The cantors and seers are worried about Philippopolis, and a recent prophecy claims that the gem of Thracia is about to fall, and that a tempest of blades and darkness from the north is about to fall upon it.

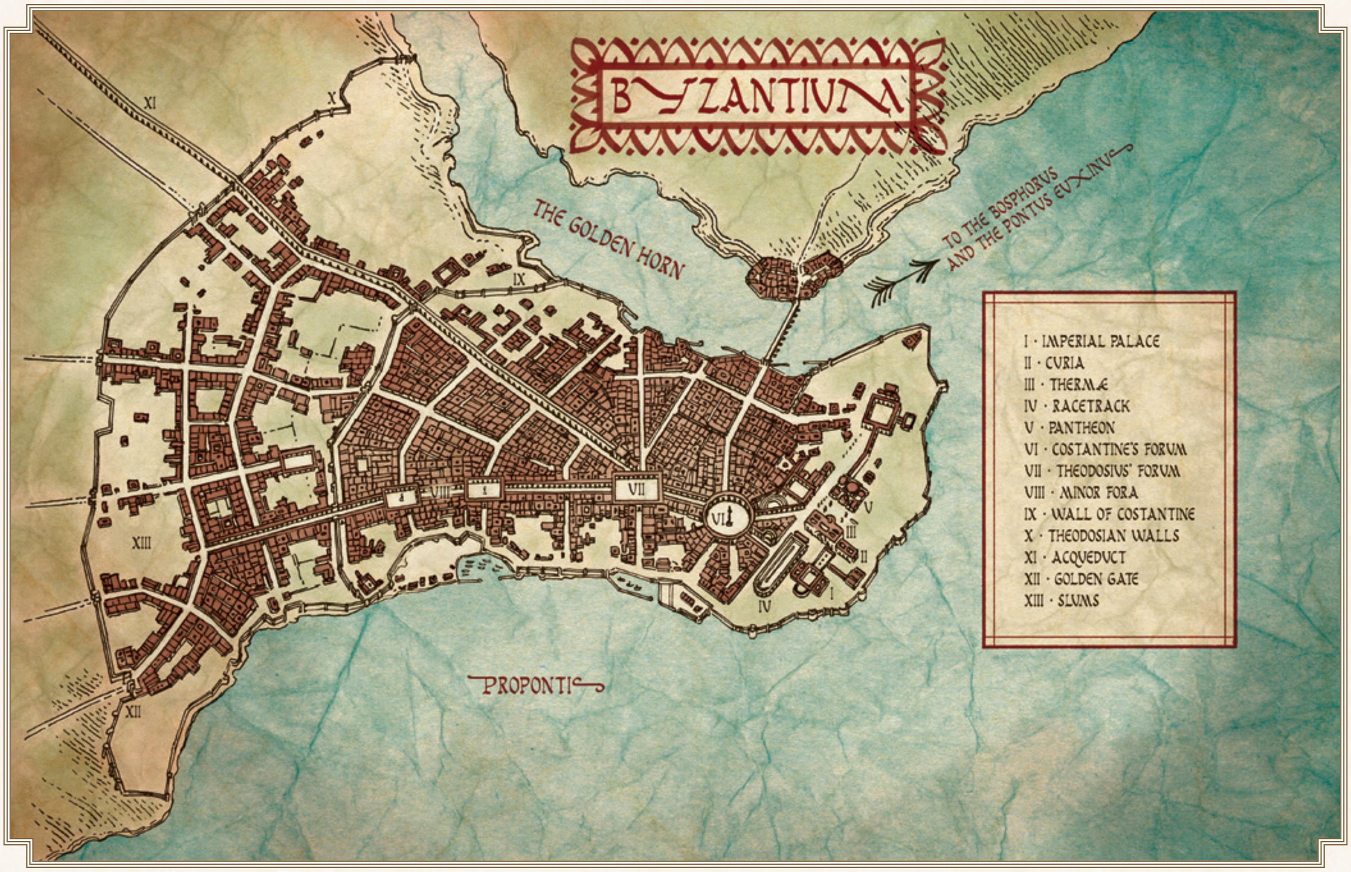
BYZANTIUM, THE SECOND ROME

Byzantium, the Golden City; Byzantium, the Second Rome; Byzantium, the Capital of the East. In spite of the constant war fought right outside its walls, the second city of the Empire for political and economic importance, the third for number of inhabitants if compared to Alexandria Magna. is a riot of splendor and wealth in the easternmost reaches of Europa. Neither as large and orderly as Alexandria, nor as powerful and ancient as Rome, Byzantium boasts nonetheless an enviable position on the Golden Horn, a closed stretch of sea where hundreds of vessels can dock, and on the Propontis, the body of water that connects the Pontus Euxinus and the Mare Aegeum together. To those from the Mare Internum who see from afar the colossal walls of the city, the roofs and golden terraces of its palaces, shrines, and temples, and the imposing lines of its harbors, Byzantium appears as a Hellenistic and Roman marvel before the exotic lands of the east and the savagery to the north. Equally, for those from the east or the north, Byzantium is the golden gate that allows them to reach the Empire and the Roman civilization.

The most vibrant and industrious side of the city is the one along the Golden Horn, and its numerous piers, docks, and warehouses. The best known part to travelers and visitors, however, is the one opposite, the southern front of the promontory that has developed over the course of the centuries thermae, theaters, fora, and porches. The area of the palaces of power and the most important buildings of the city is on the eastern hill of the promontory, overlooking the Bosporus, the naval corridor that unites Europa and Asia. Although there are a great many trade caravans that reach Byzantium by land from Thracia or Armenia, it is its harbor where the ships from both east and west stop, at the "Gates of the East".

TO LIVE AND LET DIE IN BYZANTIUM

The main city of Thracia and the entire Eastern Prefecture is outlined in the adventure *To Live and Let Die in Byzantium* in *Mysteries of the Empire, Volume I*, which also contains additional scenarios set in this region. The description of the city in those pages expands on what is here and provides an Encounters Table for that city.



THE EASTERN CAPITAL, BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT

Today, Byzantium appears like a golden wonder of hundreds of temples, shrines, and palaces, rivaling Rome's in magnificence, distinguished however by their exotic look and their Greek and Eastern traits. If Rome incarnates tradition and Alexandria represents a door to the culture and the ancient past of Aegyptus and Africa, Byzantium is truly the Capital of the East of the Empire, a center that prospers in places where Greek tradition had its historical border and met with the unknown.

Many of the new fashions and perspectives on the future that have slowly made their way into the Empire and our way of life come from Byzantium, which acquires, transforms, and elaborates secrets, tendencies, and discoveries from beyond the borders before instilling them into the daily life of the Western Prefecture. Here matrons have abandoned the traditional stola and palla and prefer the dalmatica in combination with the chlamys, decorated with rare stones, pearls, amber and gold, and silver platelets.

However, like all the ancient cities, the story of the Gate of the East weaves together stories of violence and splendor, of growth and decay, that have brought to the present political makeup, always on the edge between betrayal and loyalty, schism and union, and resistance to the hordes of the north and definitive collapse.

The second metropolis of the Empire has a foundation that dates back, as said, to the centuries before the Trojan War, when an archaic and secondary Thracian tribe chose to settle the promontory that controls the southern access to the Bosporus.

The kings of ancient Lygos are not remembered by their historians, and the same founding tribe seems to have suffered over the course of the centuries a damnatio memoriae from the other Thracians.

Lygos grew strong and powerful for centuries, but with a terrible hunger for violence, and the prisoners of war led through its city were often sacrificed in cruel massacres to the dark deities of the Underworld. It is said that the famous king Diomedes, who raised Nightmare Horses fed on human flesh, was the ruler of this small coastal kingdom.

Centuries ago, the colonists of the Greek city of Megara conquered the settlement and wiped out the previous dynasty, allegedly through cruel deeds, up to and including setting on fire and destroying the palace of the ancient kings with all the horrors it contained.

It is said to have been the Oracle of Delphi that pointed out the remains of the ancient Thracian city as the best spot to colonize this strategic area, although the settlers attempted anything they could to work around her response. Augurs and prophets were interrogated numerous times, but they all confirmed the oracle: the safest place from external attacks in the region was the outcropping surrounding the Golden Horn. So the Megarans founded their acropolis right there, and since then it has been the defensive center and the administrative heart of Byzantium.

Already, in the most distant past, the inhabitants of the Second Rome claimed to live "where it looks the safest and most prosperous in the inhabited world".

That the center of power of the region and second metropolis of the world has remained for two thousand years in the same location is bizarre but not unusual, although such detail has sparked the most mysterious rumors...
A most ancient and well-known verse says the following:

The king lies in the palace and sits in the caves.
In the dark at day, in the light at night,
Bloodthirsty in peace, Friendly in war
Forever above the sea and below the earth.

The elders make the signs of the gods and protection when children sing this rhyme. When asked about such fear, they shiver and say that the rhyme is also a grim enigma...

The enviable position of Byzantium was also the motive of conquests, wars, and ruin, as often happened in the matters of men and kingdoms of the past. Persians and Athenians, Spartans and Macedonians fought over it for generations, until the death of Alexandros.

An ally of Rome for many years, what had been an independent city-state was eventually handed to the Republic, and during the Principate of Augustus became actual part of the Empire. Although the city was constantly enriched and expanded throughout its history, it was Constantine who turned Byzantium into the metropolis it is today: a multicultural center, key in trading and moving troops, capable of rivaling Rome itself, even worrying some that it could separate and rule as the capital the eastern lands of the Empire.

Fortunately, this division has never happened, and today Byzantium is a modern city, protected by enormous walls that guard its access to the sea and boasting half a million people, let alone the hundreds of thousands of people who every year trade, work, stop by its thermae, and visit its palaces and shrines.

THE SHAPE OF THE CITY

Byzantium rises on seven hills and is divided into fourteen districts, as if emulating the capital of the Empire. Its bursting wealth and prestige are reflected not only in the countless palaces of its central districts, but also the very roads are dotted with marble porches, portals, and bronze columns, as the wonderful arches erected in perpetual memory by the triumphant Emperors against Vandals, Goths, and Huns are scattered about the city, along and around the two main ring walls.

The outer wall is the *Murus Theodosii*, surrounded by tens of thousands of shacks, hovels, and improvised shelters for the miserable and those who still live in the shadow of our beacon of civilization. Beyond the city gates, however, the vista changes dramatically. The outer wall contains a relatively orderly and respectful neighborhood for small traders, craftsmen, and servants. Those used to the worker neighborhoods of Alexandria and Rome, where crime and decadence prosper, will be surprised by the composure and dignity of theses citizens and servants who live here, who only wish to improve their condition through their work and the possibilities offered by Byzantium.

Within the inner wall, the *Murus Constantini*, the heart of the city is made up of populated districts, where the insulae are gradually renovated and rebuilt, ever taller and more luxurious, to house the prosperous and burgeoning middle class. The main roads are wide and orderly, extending radially from the Fora of Theodosius and Constantine, two of the main centers of the civil life of the metropolis. Thermae, fountains, underground canals, and sewers are numerous and well-kept, although the old network is reputed to be dangerous for those who do not know it well. Alleys, secondary roads, and small squares abound in the central districts, but frequent renovation and a constant growth in the population tend to tear down the previous intricate Greek planning to impose the order and rationality of our architects. Its famous harbor is essentially an endless series of piers and landing spots scattered about the numerous natural inlets of the coast, especially the northern one on the Golden Horn. It is here that are the main storehouses of wine, oil, grains, dried fish, and *garum*, as well as the smaller and more heavily guarded warehouses for the more precious cargo.

Tens and tens are the daily vessels docked or in transiting between the various piers of the city, while the military docks house a considerable detachment of the Legio XI Claudia, vessels of the *Classis Moesica* and the seat of the prefecture.

Going east to the rocky outcrop, the districts and insulae grow thinner, the coast disrupts the succession of piers, and one can see the shapes of the best-known buildings of the city: the Hippodrome and the Thermae of Theodosius. In the location of the ancient Megaran acropolis and the forgotten city of Lygos rises the complex of monumental buildings key to the political life of the entire province: the palace of the Governor of Thracia, the Curia, and the palace reserved to visiting Emperors.

Among the places of worship, the most exotic and noteworthy is the Church of the Holy Apostles, willed by Emperor Constantine. This Christian shrine has a cruciform layout and five golden domes sustained by enormous arches, reaching for the Heaven of the Christians. This shrine being the largest in the metropolis surprises only those who do not know the sort of power the Christians wield in the city. The outer courtyard, larger than the church itself, is constantly teeming with local followers and pilgrims.

There are a great number of squares, shrines, and tabernacles dedicated to all the cults allowed in the province and the surroundings: imposing shrines to the Great Gods and the Kabeiroi, numerous temples of Hecate, patron of the city, tabernacles to the Muse and Orpheus, ancient sacred structures dedicated to Dyonisus Thracian, Nemesis, and Bendis Kotys, and secondary votive chapels, almost forgotten, of the cults of eastern and Scythian deities.

To establish the dominion of the Official Cult over these eastern influences and the Christian cult, work has begun on the Pantheon, an ambitious architectural project currently only realized in its foundations, dedicated to the Olympians, more magnificent than any other place of worship in the city. The project is widely supported by the Imperial administration, which sees in its actuation a due tribute to the *Pax Deorum*, upon which the Empire has founded its safety for centuries, and for the moment honored in the city only through minor buildings.

THE HIPPODROME AND THE FIVE FACTIONS

Although there are a great many places of worship in the city, the most important among civil buildings is surely the seat of the mundane ritual the Byzantines love the most: the Hippodrome.

Dedicated to Castor and Pollux, it was built in the eastern-most side of the promontory, among the other major buildings. This structure is prodigious in size and can seat more than a hundred thousand spectators on tens of rows of seats. A direct passage allows visiting foreign rulers to reach the Imperial tribune from the palace where they reside, while a wide promenade behind the stands, decorated with rows of statues and columns, and the tall towers and obelisks to the center of the track offer to all spectators a backdrop worthy of the most munificent games.

The Hippodrome is used in games of all kinds, although the daily chariot races tend to attract the largest crowds: local servants, citizens, and aristocrats, as well as visiting travelers. Among their favorites are often Thracian athletes, charioteers, and gladiators, believed to be gifted with all the physical and moral characteristics of the heroes of the ancient legends.

The main races are held weekly and during the festivities, and are centered on the competition between four historic factions, distinguished by the colors of the clothing of their athletes, their horses' harnesses, and the decorations of their chariots. In recent times arose a fifth, financed by foreign money. In a few years, the continuous races and constant rivalry between the factions have become the mirror of the political feuds of Byzantium, and now the Five Colors are at the center of any political and social battle, leading to continuous brawls and unsanctioned gatherings of armed people.

The most famous rivalry is the one between the Greens, the faction sponsored mostly by the wealthy land owners and patricians, and the Blues, the beloved of the lower classes, sailors, and dockworkers, often considered the most likely to cheat.

The ebullient Reds are the favorites of legionaries and warriors, among whose ranks they often compete, thanks to special assignments, while the Whites are considered the most honest and respectful of the rules, counting mostly Christians among their supporters, to whom it is a matter of religion first and sports second.

The recent rise of the Blacks is due to the great presence of foreign merchants and athletes in the city, especially Gothic, who have insisted through powerful patrons on having their own Faction and players. The novelty has greatly propelled the interest and business of the Hippodrome, but that has not been enough to spare the Black team the hatred or the accusations of meddling with dark arts to win.

Although the feuding, armed fighting, and revolts provoked by the races leave on the ground numerous corpses and ever burning rivalries, the Factions have proved to support the legions during the last barbarian sieges, and it is impossible for the Vigiles or local magistrates to put an end to their power in the civic and political life of the city.

BYZANTIUM - ENCOUNTERS TABLE

This table covers some encounters the contubernium might have in the heart of Byzantium. Roll 1d20 every time it is deemed relevant. These encounters can happen both at day and night. Add 5 when rolling after a race at the Hippodrome.

d20 Roll	Event
1-10	**Nothing of note.** Everything is fine. Praised be the god of the Jews!
11	**Madman!** In the heart of the city wanders a beggar covered in filth and strange symbols. He goes around rambling with spirited eyes about snakes that slither in the shadows and some looming great darkness.
12	**Evangelists.** A group of Christians offers food and shelter to beggars and the needy. They seem charitable and kind, but behind their words some sense ideals that in the long run smell of domination.
13	**A strange rhyme.** A blank-stared child sings a bizarre rhyme in archaic Greek. The words are from an ancient poem, its meaning not yet fully understood: *The king lies in the palace and sits in the caves. / In the dark at day, in the light at night, / Bloodthirsty in peace, Friendly in war / Forever above the sea and below the earth.*
14	**The mark of Hecate.** Three large and aggressive-looking men bear in plain sight a gladiatorial mark. A De Magia roll (DT 9) identifies the mark as the Trigla, a fish with a three-pronged tail associated with the goddess Hecate. The trio must have participated in the last Ludi of Hecate, of which it is murmured in the city.
15	**Macabre remains.** The decomposed carcass of something looking like a donkey lies in a corner. A De Natura roll (DT 9) identifies a nauseating trail of something that slithered from the inside of the beast into the sewers.
16	**The First King.** While the Custodes wander about the city, they spot an ancient bas-relief partially eroded by time. If they choose to clean and study it, on a successful De Scientia roll (DT 9) they read "Apl[...] First King Re of Lyg[...]". What might it mean?
17	**The crying Amazon.** A young Amazon sits in tears, but forces herself to stop as the Custodes draw near. She is reserved and collected, but it seems she has failed a mission she had taken on months before. On a successful **De Societate** roll (DT 9), the girl says she was supposed to deliver a message from her queen to the "King of the Romans", asking for help against the enemies of her people, but in the city nobody seems to listen to her.
18	**Sycorax.** A hunched old woman touches the Custos with the highest Sensibilitas score. She is Sycorax, the old Scythian witch (see page 149). In that instant, the Custos has something akin to a vision concerning their current mission, which they can interpret to glean some clue.
19	**The eastern fashion.** A group of senators' wives came from Rome to buy clothing for upcoming initiatives in Italia. An expert-looking procurator is showing them around the city, inspecting luxury boutiques and workshops. Some of these fine ladies would perhaps not turn down an adventure...
20	**Workers for the pantheon.** A team of hard-working masons, led by a skilled-looking foreman, have been called into the city to work on the Pantheon. Thanks to their expertise, the work should resume with good pace. They seem intrigued by the intense Byzantium life and could party a tad too hard.
21	**Conflicting factions: Whites.** A group of Christian youths is gathering offerings for their faction and to buy tickets for the Hippodrome. Wealthy citizens rooting for the Reds and Blacks have already attacked them a few times, and the young supporters are demoralized. Helping them make things even and obtain more offerings is a good way to make new friends.

d20 Roll	Event
22	**Conflicting factions: Blues.** The Blues have not won a race at the Hippodrome in some time, and now a small crowd of Reds and Greens, the favorites in the upcoming competitions, is mocking them with songs and jokes. Helping them match word for word is a good way to make new friends.
23	**Conflicting factions: Greens.** The Greens have won the last few races at the Hippodrome, and everybody believes they have cheated, bribing judges and other charioteers. A smattering of Blues and Blacks is mocking and throwing rotting vegetables at a group of supporters celebrating their last triumph. Helping them disperse their aggressors is a good way to make new friends.
24	**Conflicting factions: Reds.** A gang of Blues and Whites has backed a smaller group of Reds into an alley and are ready to start a brawl. Helping them disperse their aggressors is a good way to make new friends.
25	**Conflicting factions: Blacks.** A group of Whites, backed up by some Greens, is throwing insults and rocks at two charioteers of the Blacks, accusing them of practicing dark arts in their races. The Blacks are scared and furious, and about to draw blades. Helping them disperse their aggressors is a good way to make new friends.

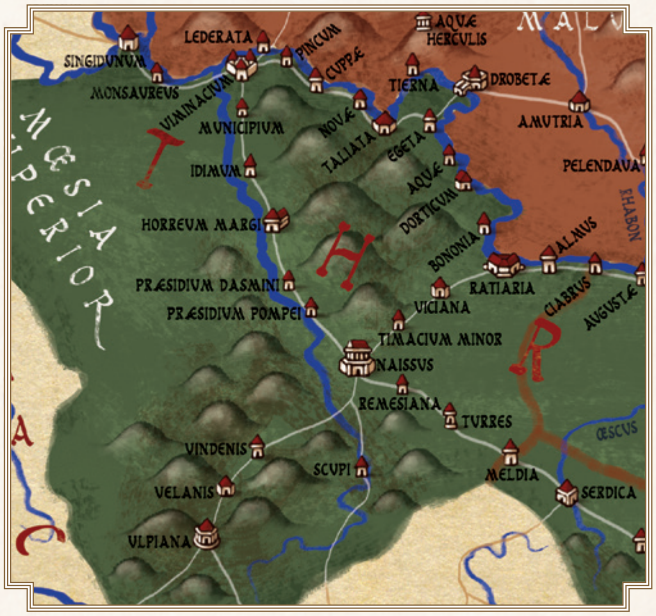
MOESIA SUPERIOR, THE MOUNTAINS OF THE GREAT GODS

As compared to the regions of Moesia Inferior devastated by war and the dark lands of Dacia, Moesia Superior appears tranquil. And this is bizarre, keeping in mind the harsh and wild configuration of these lands, which at first glance could look like the most inhospitable in the Empire: barren and steep mountains, sliding valleys and cliffs, thick and savage forests, and few settlements, often plagued by ancient evils and besieged by beasts.

The Imperial occupation here leaves a great degree of autonomy to the locals, its only interest being managing the mines of iron, lead, and silver, the keeps, the roads, and the fluvial ports.

Moesia Superior is far away from the main traffic of the Empire and, other than the great cities, the banks of the Danuvium, and the great roads that cross it, as well as those of the rest of the province, things look calm. The local population mostly takes to the rolling plains without roads and trails to move, to make the best of their wonderful horses that everybody here, even children, perfectly well knows how to ride. On the junctions of these invisible trails, they have built small sacred shrines to the "Thracian Rider", a beloved local deity of unknown name and gender. Some think these constructions are milestones, although it is always good to leave small offerings to the Rider and show the proper respect.

Still today this region is rural and mountainous, the local Greek dialect is thick and of ancient origin, the traditions old and unchanged for centuries, everything contributing to the feeling of isolation and worship of the past.



For many, this is the last bulwark of Thracian culture, far from Greek and Roman opulence in Thracia, as well as the front of the war of Moesia Inferior.

For Custodes who wish to investigate the most archaic Thracian traditions or are interested in their lost cults and mysteries, it is this corner of the Empire they must visit.

The local mountaineers and farmers preserve legends and myths about the Titans and the Kabeiroi, the Great Gods of their people and Dionysus, and it seems they know numerous ways to avoid the unnatural threats that plague the inhabitants of Dacia, Byzantium, and the coast. Their ancient and rustic wisdom, however, was unfortunately not enough to keep at bay war and the barbarian invasions.

ENCOUNTERS AND COMPLICATIONS IN THRACIA AND MOESIA SUPERIOR

Unlike the dangerous Dacia and Moesia Inferior, these regions of the Empire feature a landscape familiar to the Imperials. The rich cities and the countryside of Thracia and the mountainous and rural vistas of Moesia Superior are not much different from provinces anywhere else in the Empire. Should they wish to include random encounters in towns, at day or at night, at the thermae or the places of trade, or travel accidents on land and sea, the Demiurge can use the corresponding tables present in the Encyclopaedia Arcana.

SINGIDUNUM, ON THE BORDERS BETWEEN THREE PROVINCES

The city of Singidunum rises on consecrated land, already considered favored by the gods of the ancient Galli and Germani who founded the first settlement, a thousand years ago.

After the conquest of Gnaeus Cornelius Cornelius, inspired by rumors and prophecies, the invaders were pushed beyond the Danuvium, and the city reconsecrated to the gods of Rome. It was then that here was garrisoned the Legio IV Flavia Felix, and around the castrum the settlement was reborn, of great importance during the Dacian campaigns and portrayed in the Traianus Column, in Rome.

After decades of growth and development, roughly a century ago Singidunum was devastated by the Goths, only to be rebuilt stronger and sturdier than before, connected to a subterranean network of passages and tunnels that from the fortress could lead beyond the closest borders.

Today Singidunum stands on the junction between Thracia, Dacia, and Illyricum, and the troops still garrisoned here are another fundamental strategic asset for all the prefecture. After the devastation wrought by the Goths, the settlement was rebuilt in a rational and enlightened manner, with straight streets, great squares, temples, aqueducts, thermae, fountains, and an immense sewerage system. Recently, the lands between the old castra and the shore of the Danuvium have been occupied by a vast suburban area plagued by crime and smuggling, so much so it has attracted a dark fame on the whole center, as if a true “city of thieves”.

The center has tall and mighty walls and is surrounded by towers, moats, and garrisoned canals until the Danuvium, a fluvial port that is one of the most important of the region, where much of the Pannonia fleet is stationed.

VIMINACIUM, THE CITY OF GLADIATORS

To the east of Singidunum is the most important city of Moesia Superior, Viminacium, on the Danuvium limes and the garrisoned road that follows it to its mouth. This fortress was founded by our Emperors centuries ago, far from the villages of the Thracians, as a strategic control point for the region.

A whole legion has been garrisoned here for a long time, presiding over the banks of the river and keeping at bay many of the issues, both internal and external, just with the threat of deadly force alone. Thirty years ago, however, Viminacium was struck by the Black Horde of Attila, during his last campaign, and part of the city was destroyed for good.

The mausoleum of the Emperor Hostilianus, the vast temple of Nemesis, and the busy fluvial port are the only architectural references of the city, alongside its main attraction: the Hostilian Amphitheater. The Hostilis, so called for its posthumous dedication to the Emperor buried thereby, for the extreme violence of its ludi, and for the presence of numerous *scholae* where barbarians, strangers, and prisoners trained for the shows, is an amphitheater with twenty thousand seats, the most important of the province. Its management is careful, while the ludi and the related activities are the pride of the city and main source of entertainment of the its inhabitants, so intensely lived that the partisans of this or that schola often end up fighting in the stands or in the streets.

Here train numerous gladiators. among the best of the prefecture, specializing in the ancient Thracian arts and maneuvers, who have brought so much glory to such practice, and also numerous Dimacherii and Sagittarii, for the ludi ad *bestias* and ad *monstra* (against animals and mythical creatures, respectively). The latter, dangerous and often terrifying, are a yearly appointment that sees harpies, cyclopes, manticores, and other wild creatures of Thracia and attracts thousands of spectators from Byzantium, Ulpia Traiana, Macedonia, and Achaia, too. If the Schola Thracica is the most appreciated, there are still a great many schools relying on exotic fighters and moves: Huns, troglodytes, Sacians from the deep north, and even Gelloi.

Another peculiarity of Viminacium is the importance of an unauthorized servile covenant formed by the gladiators, perpendicular to the individual scholae, the Covenant of Spartacus.

Around these parts it is narrated that, centuries ago, the famous gladiator seems to have escaped the massacre of the servile revolt in Italia and returned to his province of origin. Here, having learned his lesson from his past experiences, he did not rebel against the Empire, instead promoting among the gladiators a secret mutual aid society of sorts, with the goal of improving their miserable condition within the boundaries of Roman laws.

The Covenant has spread to numerous cities of the Empire, where such shows are held, while in Viminacium it is a reality that works under the light of the sun, directly managing the main scholae and even the ludi of the Hostilian Amphitheater. Its principles of sharing, communal funds, and a united front against oppressors and the patricians are opposed everywhere, but here in Viminacium such initiatives are public and have the consensus of almost the entire population.

This is mostly due to the extraordinary management of the ludi, as many people find employment of the city, as well as the fundamental contribution of the gladiators of the Covenant to the army in the battle against the Huns, thirty years before, an unforgettable episode that saved the city. Even the legionaries, ordered to keep the ever-growing power of the Covenant in balance, are friendly to the gladiators, and the principles of unity the gladiators propagate are beginning to take hold on the soldiers.

THE GLADIATORS OF VIMINACIUM

The Demiurge can use the Covenant in support of or against the Custodes in many of their adventures in the region. First of all, this covenant has expanded more or less everywhere in the Empire where there are gladiator scholae and ludi. The causes the Covenant fights for have been spreading more and more among the population of servants, plebeians, and soldiers, effectively becoming a revolutionary and subversive element, ready to detonate at the first occasion. After so many centuries, will Spartacus have his vengeance at last?

The Vilii brothers, the characters met in the adventure *The Sons of Caligula* in *Mysteries of the Empire, Volume I*, could be two leaders of the Covenant and introduce the Custodes to the secret network of their contacts, for one reason or another.

The gladiators in Viminacium, especially those trained to fight *ad monstra*, could teach the Custodes *teknés* against the monsters they are used to fighting in the Ludi Hostiles. Here, the Demiurge has full license of choosing the kind of tricks or tactics they can learn.

For example:

Adversus: Vampires and Gelloi. Used to fighting in the Ludi Nocturni, dedicated to Nemesis, against these creatures, often under the guise of ruthless champions, the gladiators of the Covenant of Spartacus know how to distract these human beasts, kept without blood for days. By dealing themselves a visible and bleeding wound to the off arm, equal at least to the willing loss of 1 Hit Point, the fighter can distract for a tempus the monster, which is considered *Surprised* for the first attack against it.

SERAMIS

Born in the body of a man, Seramis has always identified with the life and clothing of a woman, up to making use of drugs and pharmaka to alter their physical appearance to what they desired. It is said that, during their *cursus*, Pluto granted them beauty, youth, and the capacity to become man or woman at will, depending on the mission at hand.

Today Seramis is a veteran of indefinite age who appears as a pleasant middle-aged patrician, an elegant and refined patron of the social life of Ratiaria. Their knowledge of poisons and drugs, their network of informants and spies, and their old and powerful friends all over the region could be of great help to the Custodes... assuming they do not make an enemy out of Seramis, of course!

Seramis
Value: DV8
1 die: De Bello, Sensibilitas
2 dice: De Bello (Daggers), De Societate, Hit Points, Ratio
3 dice: De Corpore, De Societate (Deceit)
Hit Points: 16
Weapons: Poisoned Sica (Damage 4)
Protections: None

Special Abilities: Acute Senses, Poison (3DV), Stealthy
Magic Powers: Fate Roll

RATIARIA, THE PATRICIAN CITY

The most important center along the fortified road that parallels the Danuvium to the border with Moesia Superior is Ratiaria. The city is known for its heavy military presence, as well as for being a place of trade and passage. It is the link between the two regions and is located right in front of Dacia. Nearby gold and silver mines, not comparable to the Dacian ones, but still working and well-kept, ensure economic prosperity. Here rises a monumental temple to Tellus, warden of the sacred and prosperous mines and bringer of blessings, the largest known in the Empire, which was wanted by Septimius Severus.

All of these elements - safety, trade, prosperity - have attracted many of the Romans aristocrats of the region, the wealthiest merchants and procuratores, who chose this place of relative peace to build their domus and villae, house their families, and reside when not busy elsewhere. In the last decades, the blossoming of imposing and luxurious buildings, the developing of gardens, orchards, and theaters, and the small but elegant social life have conferred on this minuscule and peripheral center the title of "patrician city".

Here the Avars have one of their semi-permanent camps, and in town the cult of Zalmoxis has devout followers, probably due to the many Dacians who moved from beyond the river.

Although war is close and the martial law is stringent, here one can breathe a semblance of tranquility, marred only by the occasional murder and the mysterious kidnappings that have happened recently among the wealthier citizens. However, the Cohors Arcana has not deemed those issues critical enough to investigate, as they do not seem to present unnatural elements.

The shrines of the Official Cult are present, but the larger and more lavish temples were built in honor of the Great Gods, the most beloved by the people, and to whom the majority of the citizens of rank seem to have converted, too.

In Ratiaria also lives a known former Custos, who retired from Imperial service before the institution of the Lex Arcana. Their name is Seramis, Diplomat of unparalleled knowledge and acumen, secretly an Assassin. The Custodes who stop by during their missions can ask them for information and support.

NAISSUS, THE CITY OF NYMPHS

Thracians, who claim Dionysus was born in Thracia, believe the god spent his youth in Naissus. Geographically in the heart of Moesia, as a strategic crossroads and mercantile city, Naissus is where Roman civilization meets the Thracian people and the main trading takes place.

From Naissus passes the road that connects Ratiaria on the Danuvium with the Adriatic coast and the one that leads from Viminacium to the border with Dacia and then continues through Thracia, through Philippopolis, Adrianopolis, and up to Byzantium. Since the time of Augustus, it was the seat of a legionary fortress, and for the whole IX century AUC capital of the new province of Moesia.

Two centuries ago, the largest Gothic invasion ever recorded in our history brought ruin to the coasts of the Black Sea and penetrated deeply into the territories of Macedonia, Pannonia, and Thracia, while on land the Goths crossed and flanked Dacia, passing the Danuvium with a hundred-thousand-strong throng. It was then that our Empire trembled and, like sadly like too many times in our past, was on the brink of collapsing on itself.

The Gothic advance was stopped at Naissus, however, thanks to the joint effort of the Emperor himself and many legions. It is said that then, overwhelmed by the arms of the invaders and their Wolf Warriors, the augurs and priests turned to the ancient and secluded followers of Orpheus, the members of the sacred Thracian brotherhood called Thiasos, asking them to invoke Dionysus and the Nymphs to help us against the barbarians.

The results of that apparently lost battle were turned. In the shape of an immense bear, surrounded by beasts and prodigies, vines sprouting from the ground, Dionysus made his appearance on the battlefield and defended his land and his city, tearing the Wolf Warriors of the north apart. In the bloodiest battle of that generation, half of the Goths were killed and their bones left on the ground for wild animals, as requested by the divine helpers of the Emperor.

Contemporary chroniclers say the following:

The Goths then broke their ranks and everybody attempted to save himself, fleeing as far as they could until they swam across the Danuvium and vanished in the thick forests of Dacia, attempting to reach their lands. And their captains were the first in the rout. In the following years, even travelers found it difficult to reach the city, as the earth around the river was strewn with the bones of the men killed in war.

Naissus was then reconsecrated to Dionysus, and its surroundings blessed by the Nymphs. In addition, the Thiasos was secretly recognized as a mysteric brotherhood friendly to the Empire, although Orphism was never allowed into the tolerated cults or publicly recognized in Thracia.

Emperor Constantine was born nine months later, right in that city, and many saw in this fact a secret prodigy of the benevolence of Dionysus and the gods to the Empire, evidence of the divine favor that has allowed Rome to prosper in the following centuries up to the present day.

The memory of the Battle of Naissus and the splendor of the Temple of Dionysus, which can be admired from a great distance, saved the city from the Huns. During his invasion thirty years ago, Attila ordered his horde to move around the city and stay away from the grove of the Nymphs surrounding it, and it seems no band of pillagers has ever entered the sacred forest in all these years.

And if they ever did, of them is left not even the memory.

VICIANA, THE CITY OF HORSES

At the beginning, Viciana was barely a *mansio* for traveling caravans and merchants, with a small military garrison and a large emporium nearby. In the last century, however, this minor center has become the main aggregation place in the region for the Avar families headed to Moesia Superior. Today, in any moment of the year, one can find here thousands of them, almost like a proper city, which remains the same as its citizens come, go, and change continuously.

The few public and masonry structures of Viciana are surrounded by vast prairies and pastures, upon which live the Avar tribes in an almost sacred disposition that utterly escapes our rules and logic. A close and incomprehensible negotiation, an exchange of agreements and familial secrets, oral contracts, and binding pacts take place among them, who seem to gather here to seal their mutual obligations according to their ancient procedures.

Their presence and the large local farms have made the city one of the largest horse markets of the province, with specimens from Scythia, farms all over Thracia, and even nightmare and Agathyrsi mountain steeds, for the most exotic and wealthy buyers.

PART III

BEYOND THE BORDERS OF THE EMPIRE

GENERAL INFORMATION

continues from the confidential report of Flavius Artemius Longinus,
Magister of the Cohors Auxiliaria Arcana for the Provinces of Dacia and Thracia

The Custodes operating in these provinces need not only to know well the mysteries and risks of the inner lands of the limes, but also of those beyond, as they play a key role in the defense of our borders and the lives of the citizens of the Empire. There are few provinces as open and exposed to the outside as Dacia and Thracia, bordering on the shores and green plains of the Black Sea, ridden by the hordes of our enemies, and on the endless lands of Scythia, where lie ancient secrets and wander primordial monsters.

The great importance of these prairies to our enemies is mostly military, grazing lands for the Horde and training and maneuvering grounds. The region is dotted with tombs haunted by ghosts, hiding the most famous of treasures: ancient gold, enchanted weapons, adamans tips, jewels, emeralds, Hyperboreal amber, and gold-woven ram skins.

For these reasons, in these scrolls I will show you the threats and points of interest outside of our borders, in the vast territories occupied by Huns, Scythians, Vandals, Goths, Amazons, Arimaspi, troglodyte tribes, and Hyperboreans.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE BORDERS

Contemporarily, allow me to dedicate this segment to the exploration of the cults, habits, and grim legends of our major enemies, the so called Huns, Goths, and Vandals, as well as the secret machinations of Attila, Odoacer, and Theodoric. Of them in particular, I shall also provide a lifelike description, should the Custodes ever face them in the flesh.

Flavia Gallia Scholastica, De Praefecturae Imperii, Va 190-195.

THE KINGDOM OF THE VANDALS

Gathered around ferocious Odoacer, celebrated by his people for his strategic gifts and prowess in the front line of battle, the Vandals and all the Germanic populations and tribes federated to them are the most mundane peril at our border, especially the Dacian limes.

THE VANDAL KING

Odoacer
Value: DV8
1 die: De Natura
2 dice: De Corpore, De Societate (Command), Ratio, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Bello, Hit Points
Hit Points: 24
Weapons: Spatha (Damage 10)
Protections: Lorica Hamata (Protection 5), Clipeus (Parry +2)

In spite of his illustrious origin, at least for a barbarian, Odoacer spent his first years between misery and worry, travels and migrations. Supposedly struck by a hundred illnesses and another hundred hunting wounds, a hundred days of fasting every year, and hundred storms during his childhood, Odoacer has survived every evil and grown stronger because of it. He became a warrior and veteran, champion and leader of his people, up until he was recognized as the toughest among the toughest breeds, the most tempered ruler of the *Mare Germanicum*.

The one thing stronger than his body is his determined and indomitable spirit, and the only thing tougher than his hide his headstrong personality.

These warriors and pillagers do not indulge in sorcery or dark arts, instead putting their trust in the purer and more brutal profession of arms, similar in danger to the Germanic tribes. Almost all the populations that fight under the banner of Odoacer are entirely Germanic: tall and strong, fair-haired and -skinned, capable of great enthusiasm and quick bursts of violence.

They are not the most savage of them, having a rigid corpus of laws and oral traditions they adhere to in every aspect of their life, from the matters of law to those of war, even daily life. And yet every man among them is primarily a warrior and a raider, war finalized to stealing and conquest. The violence and cruelty of their raids is second only to that of the Huns, and their leader seems to claim to have ancestors among the people of Attila.

To spur his people, Odoacer swore that one day he will be King of Italia and that his horses shall run unopposed across the whole Empire of Rome. Although, luckily, such a promise is far away from realization, he has sadly chosen Dacia and Moesia as his routes westward to what he sees as his future domain. The destruction he has brought so far has been limited in extension, but terrifyingly violent.

Odoacer is no maniacal destroyer, but a determined monarch, one his people think wise and benevolent, respectful of the gods and the aruspices. He wishes to defeat us, conquer our lands, take Dacia and our gold mines to consolidate his position, and begin reclaiming the other western provinces one after the other, even aspiring to one day conquer Rome. This dream of destruction and annexation, born of prophecies we think fallible but in which he strongly believes, has led him to imagine himself sitting on the Imperial throne, as the first barbarian king of Italia. Although such visions are false and conflict with those sent by the gods to our mystics and augurs, he is inspired by them in his campaigns, so much so that he might be shackled by them.

His people are tenacious and resolute, but for now present an issue we can keep in check. In Dacia and Thracia, his men often appear as explorers, vanguards looking for small fights to test our defenses, pillagers let out to prod us, but ready to fall back beyond the border as soon as our war machine starts grinding into motion.

They are a completely different threat beyond the limes, where the Vandal nations and their confederates have erected camps, citadels, fortifications, and villages. We are the intruders there, and our explorers must prove skilled beyond measure. Nobody knows those forests and savage lands like the Vandals of Odoacer, and their mastery of the lands to the north of Dacia is unparalleled.

THE SCEPTER OF ATLAS AND THE MYSTERIES OF THE SUNKEN CITIES

The events relative to the Scepter of Atlas and the secrets of the cities of the Pontus Euxinus are mentioned in the adventure *The Sons of Caligula* in *Mysteries of the Empire, Volume I*. If the Demiurge wishes to further explore these elements of fantastic archeology, it is advisable to use the Archeology and Daedala Specialties in the *Aegyptus* module. According to what is reported in *The Sons of Caligula*, the sunken cities of the Black Sea today are a few tens of arm's lengths below the surface, and the roofs of the tallest buildings can sometimes be sighted from ships sailing above them. To explore them, the contubernium needs great skill in swimming or advanced tools, such as the diving bells from the adventure.

THE SECRETS OF THE PONTUS EUXINUS

The Pontus Euxinus is a calm sea without any major currents or tides, not very fecund, its depths sour and lifeless. Fishing has never been a great tradition of these lands, and only a few villages of fishermen have risen on its shores. As far as our province is concerned, the major centers are Byzantium and Salmydessus, with some boats leaving every day from Apollonia and the Pentapolis.

It is only in Salmydessus, however, that whaling is practiced, the hunt for the great leviathans that migrate there from the Mediterranean. In that small center are workshops and a shipyard dedicated to the building of specialized ships for this activity.

Whaling is a complex and tiresome practice, requiring at the same time the mastery of sailing typical of the most expert sailors and the strength and tenacity of the beast hunters. It is for this reason that it is reserved to the bravest and most skilled fishermen of the surroundings, and often the local captains enlist barbarians, warriors, and former gladiators in their crews to put them on winches or harpoons.

In Salmydessus are three docks for these peculiar vessels, for a total of six whaling ships and as many crews. As far as we know, all of them are somehow affiliated with or in the service of the Sons of Caligula, the cult seemingly dominating the secret life of this settlement.

Recently, the Sons of Caligula and the whaling ships have been spotted wandering far from the conventional whaling waters, in spots where are said to be ancient sunken cities, on the bottom of the sea for many thousands of years.

What we have learned so far is that such centers date back to the remote times when the coast of the Pontus Euxinus was much shorter, and the level of the water much wider. Along that coast allegedly rose the colonies of lost and distant Atlantis, a civilization that sank when the passage of the Bosporus opened fully to the waters of the Propontis, flooding the region.

Those prehistoric events have a distant echo in what happened during the great deluge of Deucalion and Pyrrha, one of the most remote legends of our traditions.

The inhabitants of those now-sunken colonies supposedly had achieved a technological might even greater than that of the Empire, especially in the field of machinery, and the sunken ruins could hide secrets of forgotten sciences and wonderful artifacts. According to the Custodes who have dealt with the Sons of Caligula, one such artifact could be the famed Scepter of Atlas, supposedly capable of causing or halting the motions of the earth. It was forged by the Titans or brought here from Atlantis, as the level of the Black Sea kept dwindling, to open the Bosporus and restore the waters of the inner sea. Unfortunately, the scholars of those ancient lost cities made a mistake, and the waters destroyed and sank all of the colonies where that relic had been used.

The waters of the Pontus Euxinus do not hide sea monsters or legendary creatures, unlike some of its coasts, which are plagued by troglodytes, troglodyte giants, Arimaspi, cyclopes, and harpies. However, it is said that in those sour and asphyxiating depths the unnatural mingling between poisons and extreme life conditions seems to have given birth to beings such as black toxic algae and a whole genus of barely-known abyssal fish, with mysterious traits and disconcerting characteristics. Finding such beings is highly unlikely for those who do not delve into those waters or purposefully wish to bother them among the broken columns and submerged ruins of the colonies of Atlantis.

ALONG THE SHORES OF THE PONTUS EUXINUS - ENCOUNTERS TABLE

Roll 1d20 whenever deemed necessary. These encounters can happen both during the day and at night. Add 5 if the Custodes are far away from settlements.

d20 Roll	Event
1-10	**Nothing of note.** Thea sea breeze soothes your travels. Praised be Neptune!
11	**Punitive raid.** A centuria is leaving to enact retribution on some Vandal raider camps. The centurion asks the Custodes if they want to join, after all, one never knows what manner of dangers await out there.
12	**Drunken whalers.** A group of loud sailors invades the streets, singing drunkenly. By passing a De Societate roll (DT 6), the Custodes learn their euphoria is due to the finding of a strange artifact inside the stomach of a whale. Although they have no idea how it ended up there, it must be a boon for sure.
13	**Funeral procession.** A dirge announces the passing of a funeral march, as a group of barbarians carries the body of a man to his final rest. Judging by the size of the processional, he must have been an important figure, and, on a successful De Magia roll (DT 9), the Custodes learn the funeral song is invoking the protection of an unknown deity.
14	**Vandal spies.** Suspicious looking men are shadowing the Custodes. A successful Sensibilitas roll (DT 9) alerts the group to their presence, otherwise the spies keep silently gathering information on Roman activities. In case of fighting, use the profile for Barbarian Warriors (1:1, see Core Rulebook).
15	**Shipwreck.** A few men on the beach are trying to get the attention of the Custodes with wild gestures. They are the survivors of a shipwreck, have neither food nor clothes, and some of them are wounded and fear they may not see the night through. They ask for help and in exchange can offer the precious contents of a box they were carrying that washed up not far away.
16	**A sudden storm.** The sun suddenly disappears behind a pall of black clouds, cold wind picks up, and within a few minutes a storm unleashes its wrath. Thunder and lightning tear the sky, casting the shape of a solitary wanderer walking toward the Custodes in erratic light, apparently dressed in animal skins.
17	**A herd of horses.** From a cloud of dust comes galloping a thunderous herd of horses. They are led by stern-faced and sun-baked-skinned herders, and, if they gain their trust with a successful De Societate roll (DT6), the group can receive directions to reach any known place within fifty leagues.
18	**Sacked tombs.** A series of low grassy hills with a round and regular shape suggests the presence of a necropolis. Their ancient accesses are buried under dirt and vegetation, but holes open occasionally on their peaks, a sign of raider activity. Maybe there are still interesting items to be found… or the restless spirits of the deceased buried within.

1d20 Roll	Event
19	**Tomb raiders.** A group of men is camped on the side of the road. At first sight, they look like simple travelers, but on a closer look (Sensibilitas, DT 3) the group notices they carry digging equipment. They are tomb robbers and maybe have something interesting on them or know the location of an ancient necropolis.
20	**A trader in need.** A wagon has stopped along the road, the ox pulling it prone on the ground in pain. The trader begs the Custodes for help, as the animal has probably eaten poisonous grass and is now apparently on the brink of death. Without it, the trader will be forced to abandon his wares.
21	**Hun band. A** group of mounted Huns gallops towards the Custodes. It is hard to say whether they are peaceful or not, but the group should not keep their hands too far from their weapons. If a fight breaks out, use the profile for Barbarian Warriors (1:1, + 1 Barbarian Champion, see Core Rulebook).
22	**Freed slaves.** A group of tired and badly dressed men clumsily try to hide as they spot the Custodes. If they, however, realize the characters are Romans, they approach them with cheer, for they are Imperial citizens captured and enslaved by barbarians. By sheer luck they escaped their captors, and now ask to be led somewhere safe.
23	**Restless Ghosts.** Evanescent figures circle around a hill, specters (1:2 Specters, see Core Rulebook) that watch over the remains of an ancient settlement. If they are defeated, the group may search for valuables in the ruins.
24	**Pack of Wolves.** A pack of wolves is hunting out of the forest and does not fear humans, they have a numerical advantage. Use the profile for Wolves (2:1, see Core Rulebook).
25	**Dark wanderer.** While the Custodes rest around their campfire (to eat or before going to bed), a man approaches, asking to share the heat. The traveler is a Gello (see page 123) aiming for the perfect occasion to feed on human blood. The creature attacks only if it has isolated a single character, finding any excuse to separate the group.

THE ISLAND OF SNAKES

This small isle is to the east of the mouth of the Danuvium, twenty or so miles from the coast. In theory, it belongs to the Empire, but being an abandoned and cursed place close to the lands of the raiders and far from all the routes of our fleets, it is de facto a rock out of our authority. The isle is covered in marble and white stones of great value, and at the same time it is known for its great abundance of venomous snakes. Ruins from ancient times rise among the vegetation and along the coast, and even in the low waters around it, perhaps the last remains of the eastern colonies of Atlantis rising here.

Tradition, however, remembers this place for a much more "recent" and mundane reason. On the Isle of Snakes is rumored to be the Tomb of Achilles, buried here after the Trojan War alongside his divine weapons and the treasures brought from Ilion. The location of this sacred burial is unknown, but tradition claims the Isle is protected by Apollo and Venus. Sailors are allowed to land on its shores, but the gods forbade them from spending the night there. Transgressors would be haunted by nightmares about Achilles, his wrath, and endless battles, and would not benefit from their sleep.

Much worse happens to those who look for the tomb of Achilles to loot or desecrate it. It is said the few who have tried, Thracian or barbarian, were blinded and cursed by the gods before they could even find it...

THE RUINS OF OPHIUSSA

The first city of the Thracians, dedicated to the Serpent God and built, according to the myth, by the Titan Tyras, progenitor of this people, lies half-buried in the swamps at the mouth of the course that still bears the name of that ancient deity.

Although it is said that ancient gold artifacts and titanic machinery are still buried there, the ancient splendor of Ophiussa has faded, replaced by decay and ruin.

If the destroyed husks of the buildings and the strange pre-human architectures remind us of those of the city of Titans between the Montes Rodopes, there is no charm or spell at work there other than the heavy pall of the mephitic miasmas of the bogs, which weigh on the souls of travelers, making them think about the transient nature of things, small and great, human or divine.

ADVENTURES IN OPHIUSSA

The first Thracian city, dedicated to the Serpent God and infested by venomous reptiles, alone could be the backdrop for numerous great adventures. The Demiurge can set there any heroic deed, quest for artifacts or secret knowledge, treasure hunt, chase, or fight with relic hunters, Hun pillagers, or Goth sorcerers out for green stones and jewels of the river. Venomous snakes, sacred animals and monsters, Arimaspi, Troglodytes, and Theurgic Constructs could still dwell here, as well as, if even more mythological monsters were needed, the lair of Chomodracaena (see page 94), a Hydra, a Gorgon, or any other ancient slumbering horror, ready to wake at the arrival of new "invaders"!

Perhaps one day Rome, too, will lie destroyed and abandoned like Ophiussa, sunken between the swamps of the Tiber? Perhaps our divine shrines will one day be lived in by the wolf and owl, as these are infested with snakes and scolopendrae? I am afraid the answer is yes, and that any explorer from far away beholding the walls of Ophiussa will receive a vision of the vanity of all...

For the less inclined to flights of the mind, Ophiussa appears like a strange and disconcerting ruined city surrounded by swamps and teeming with snakes, its prodigious geometries still visible through the miasmic mires of the Tyras.

Avoided by pillagers and barbarians, perhaps this place still has treasure or mysteries to offer a group of Custodes who know what to look for...

CIMMERIA!

Although the most ancient texts report how the Cimmerians lived up on coast of the Hyperboreal Ocean, in a land of mist and darkness at the edge of the world, the Cimmerians we know of from somewhat trustworthy sources are those who lived centuries ago right to the north of our present-day limes. These are the lands to the north of the Black Sea, today vexed by the Hun hordes.

In the country of the Cimmerians, poets told, there was no sun, the earth was covered by mist, and the shadows of the dead wandered. These ancient traditions seem to be remote echoes of the Shadow Empire I mentioned in previous paragraphs, and yet the land of the Cimmerians is for us a real place, just beyond Moesia, in the heart of what we call today Scythia.

They lived there for five hundred years and had a great and warlike kingdom, known for the ferocity of its warriors, as well as their valor and nobility. They were of fair skin and thick black manes and eyes as blue as the sky.

Geographers and explorers who have visited their lands in centuries past claim they lived in underground houses connected by tunnels and honored their ancestors, the giants who in the past ruled their people, and the oracles of the dead. Because of all these things, and their mysterious appearance, some believe they were descendants of the Enlightened and the people of the King of the World (see *Part IV*).

The Cimmerians had numerous kings and princes and highly valued hunting, war, and gold, with which they adorned themselves in both life and in death. Their deeds in war were celebrated by the Greek poets, too, and it seems they laid siege to the capital of Lidia, Sardis, in those long-ago centuries, earning glory and loot. But most of all, they admired and kept the mysteries of meteor steel, supposedly a secretly inherited by the Calibi.

They were eventually hunted and defeated by the Scythians, but for the duration of their greatness, between the fall of Atlantis and the advent of the children of Arius, they were admired and feared. They also had fruitful contacts with Thracians and Daci, as long as they did not rebel against them!

All these people vied for centuries for the control of the regions to the north and south of the Danuvium, but the river Tyras prevented them from doing great harm to one another.

The few trustworthy chronicles of those legendary days report the myth of the giants Gog and Magog who ruled the Cimmerians back at the time of the Titans and in the years of their twilight, and of the Arimaspi, who made up the bulk of their armies. These squat Scythian cyclopes gathered from every remote and savage corner of the country and led in battle against their enemies by the Cimmerian generals as shock troops. They destroyed Ophiussa, the first city of the Thracians, and greatly delayed the Thracians during the slow retreat that led to the destruction of the Cimmerians and the defeat of Gog and Magog.

Since that time, Cimmeria has been considered a gloomy and dangerous region, a misty and spectral land that embraces from the north the whole Pontus Euxinus. Although it is traveled by Scythians, Sarmatians, and Huns, it is not much inhabited and it is said that along the coasts of the Black Sea one can find only specters and shadows, as well as the last solitary and deformed Arimaspi.

But if the lost Cimmerians of myth have disappeared from the surface of the world back at the time of those ancient wars, the memory of their civilization is still kept alive by the rich and imposing tumuli tombs to the north of the Danuvium and Scythia, up into Tauris.

This news is reported here not for the sake of the history of the populations or the geographic chronicles, but because these famous sepulchers of the Cimmerians seem to contain treasures and adamans in great abundance.

There is, however, one thing to remember: the cold golds and indestructible steels of the Cimmerians are guarded by ancient, black, and ferocious charms and shadows, and even the Huns, who fear nothing in their feral raiding, stay well away from those tombs.

However, there are explorers, antiquarians, and treasure hunters who do not fear those magics, and often leave from Byzantium and Tomis headed north, following maps and rumors of such tombs, willing to do anything to find such fortunes. What curses they might bring back from the Cimmerian world of the dead is a topic I am afraid we will be forced to face soon!

OLBIA, THE STOLEN CITY

At the time of the Cimmerians and the Scythians, the coast of the Black Sea was dotted with Greek and Eastern emporiums, ports managed by sailors from the Mediterranean to trade with the people of Asia. The main settlements arose at the mouths of the larger rivers that fed into Pontus Euxinus and the Maeotian Swamp, and one of them was Olbia. Founded by the Greeks of Miletus, Olbia was for a long time an ally of the province of Thracia, and later directly subject to its authority, as were all the centers along those shores.

None of them could resist the rise of the Goths and the Huns, however. It has been a century now since every settlement of the area was devastated by pillagers and barbarian hordes and then abandoned. Only Olbia still stands, now a city of pirates and assassins that shelters the worst Scythian scum and is ruled by a warlord named Edico. Edico has sided in the course of the years with both the Goths and the Huns, and seems to belong to the people of the Sciri, foederati to one or the other throughout the years. The old and cunning raider today holds Olbia with an iron fist, offering trade goods, tributes, and supplies to the armies that pass by his gates, as well as ships when they want to cross the sea.

For the Romans, Olbia is an extremely dangerous and lawless place, where might makes right and the mightiest is Edico. There have been in the past numerous Custodes tasked with missions there, but the number of lost lives is enormous. On the other hand, Edico is not a crazy barbarian or a cultist of demons like his allies, and for the right price he can favor the Empire and its envoys.

TAURIS, THE PRISON OF GIANTS

The Cherson Peninsula, also called Tauris, is a place of ancient myths and Greek settlements, remembered by even the deeds of the most ancient and celebrated Hellenic heroes. In those legends, the barbarian kings of the region were ferocious with castaways and prisoners, cutting off their heads to plant them on spikes, and sacrificed their enemies to their goddess of the cliffs. In ages past, this region was the last settlement occupied by the Cimmerians before they were eventually defeated, chased, or exterminated by the Thracians and Scythians, the former of whom then thoroughly sacked their land, and the latter of whom took their place in the region.

If there have ever been imposing Cimmerian fortresses in the region, today there is not even one stone left, and it is believed that the main settlements and strongholds of this people and their allies, the giants Gog and Magog and the Arimaspi, were underground.

Having become, centuries ago, part of the more civilized kingdom of Cimmeria, client and ally of our Empire, this peninsula has seen the presence of our legionaries, auxiliaries, and fleets for a long time, in support of its people against the barbarians pressing at its doors. But the continuous attacks of the Goths before and the hordes of the Huns decades ago have caused its fall and ruin, two conditions this region has never recovered from. Today, the remains of this ancient kingdom, with its barbarian splendor, lies low and covered in the grass on which tread the Hun hordes, and there is nothing more to defend or reconquer.

At times, the ancient cities are used by the Lords of the Horde or the Gothic lords to gather troops and supplies as they plan invasions of Thracia, and one can often spot armies of thousands ready to attack. This is the case of Cherson, on the southern shore, a colony of ancient glory now but a passing stable for The Lords of the Horde and the Avars who shelter here. Although for the Custodes it is extremely dangerous even simply getting close to that place, a secret pact with the Avars could provide sufficient leverage for safe passage through the area without being too visible.

Other times, from the caves and mountains on the southern shore come tremors, noises, and growls that nomads and travelers ascribe to the giants buried beneath that chain. According to these traditions, the two ancient Cimmerian giants Gog and Magog are imprisoned there since the defeat of the Cimmerians at the foot of those harsh peaks, still attempting to break free. When that happens, the vengeance of giants, cyclopes, and Arimaspi against their ancient enemies will be devastating. And those enemies are the Thracians.

OF MAEOTIA: THE HORRID PEOPLE

The sickly lake of Maeotia has been inhabited since the most ancient times by a degenerate branch of the local population, aptly called Maeotians. Greek historians claim that such diminished tribes have lived here since the birth of the world, as if they were a secondary offshoot of the more famous troglodytes who have grown accustomed to life in the swamps rather than in the mountains. Even Tauri mountain folk, the savage Scythians, the ferocious Cimmerians, the forsaken Sarmatians, the malevolent Goths, and the barbarous Huns, have always had fear and disgust for them, deciding every time it was better to have nothing to do with them. With enemies on all sides, though trusting in their abject deities of the bottoms of the bogs, the Maeotians live in filthy huts along the banks of the great swamp that feeds into the Pontus Euxinus, on treacherous stilt houses and in small coastal towns where travelers are not welcome and tend to vanish.

THE MAEOTIANS

The fetid and degenerate Maeotians are perfect examples of abject and nauseating savages, their known habits being absolutely horrible, and probably hiding even worse secrets.

If the Demiurge wants the Custodes to fight them, they use the profile for Troglodytes, but with DV4 (instead of DV5) and the following magic powers: Disease (2DV, the victim must be *wounded* by the creature), Terror (1DV, the victim must *see* the creature). The Chieftains have DV5, dress in badly tanned animal skins (the equivalent of a Corium Lorica, Protection 3), and can Curse (3DV, the victim must *hear* the creature).

Those few wanderers who return from trading with the Maeotians claim they are as deformed as their cult of primordial water deities, similar in shape to the father Dagon of the Mother Hydra of the Philistines.

THE GOTHS AND THE SHADOW OF VASSAGO

Young Theodoric rules over the Goths and all the Hyperboreal, Scythian, and Caucasian people who today offer him tribute. They look similar to the tribes of the Vandal confederation in appearance, but are even taller and fairer of complexion, and hair, and their eyes are almost always light blue.

Many of them are farmers and breeders, and in times of peace show great proficiency in agriculture and animal medicine, and many of our workers and scholars have learned much from them. They are not then always at war, like the Vandals, or thrown without quarter on endless nomadic raiding, like the Huns. However, when their leaders command so, they are ready to leave their fields and beasts to their servants for months and go on wars, explorations, conquests, and looting, to return to their farms as winter draws near, laden with gold and new slaves.

They do not have any moral or social philosophy that likens them to other men or that allows them to see themselves integrated into a universal Empire such as ours, all its clans working and living side by side. They see themselves as a united and deadly people, distinct from all the others, even the nearby tribes and families, descended from gods and ancient heroes, compared to whom every other kin are but lowly servants.

THE KING OF THE GOTHS

Value: DV8
1 die: De Natura
2 dice: De Bello, De Corpore, De Societate, Ratio, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Societate (Command)
Hit Points: 16
Weapons: Ensis (Damage 8)
Protections: Lorica Hamata (Protection 5), Clipeus (Parry +2)

Flavius Theodoric is a young warrior chief cut from the same cloth as the legendary leaders of his people. Not only his blood, but also his charisma and strategic gifts have made him today the ruler of the great federation of Gothic people pressing behind him in battle. Theodoric has the noble traits of his people, but also knows the Roman world well and is capable of conversing, studying, and having philosophical debates in Latin and Greek.

In spite of the grim traditions of his people, Theodoric does not particularly appreciate demonology, and his secret desires are to be rid of Vassago's grasp on the Goths and at the same time find a way to meld his people with the Romans, as other rulers have done in the past.

Unlike the Vandals of Odoacer and the populations of their association, solely dedicated to open field war and the patrol of the savage lands, the Goths under Theodoric have paired for almost a century the life of arms with sorcery, often using the dark arts to prevail in battle, curse our envoys, and assail us with esoteric charms. Their main occult secrets derive not as much from the cult of their gods of the north, but from demonology, unique to these barbarian sorcerers.

LOST COLCHIS

The lost realm of Colchis existed since before the Trojan War, at the time of Greek gods and heroes, and is supposed to have been extremely rich in gold and ancestral charms. According to the texts of the ancient poets and scholars from Hellas, it lay "beyond the edges of the sea and earth" and the road to get there was "the longest journey", which entailed reaching the eastern borders of the known world. Its main cities, Aea, Dioscurias, Phasis, and Cutatisium, predated the foundation of Rome, and it is said that here the Calibi perfected their metalworking skills, before spreading their knowledge to the west. Other scholars believe that the numerous tribes that populated the region, all differing from one another in body, language, and traditions, were evidence that the realm had been founded by the remains of an army from eras past, which had stopped there after who-knows-what battles instead of returning home. They claim it was an army from Aegyptus of the ancient kings, or even previous Stygia at the time of the fall of Erebus, and the presence among the Colchi of a tribe of black-skinned warriors seems to lend worth to this theory.

Whatever the truth is, weakened by Scythian raids, the federation of the Colchi was eventually subjugated and annexed by the Persians, and all their secrets fell into oblivion, including their forge spells.

Colchis became a land under the control of our ancestors during the first Empire, but has never regained its old importance and is today a long-despoiled region, devastated by Hun and Gothic incursions.

Here, too, the ancient treasures, the secrets of gold and adamans, and the mysteries of forgotten sorcery lie forgotten among the ruins of the millennia, in crumbling shrines to Hecate and Nemesis, and in the ancient palaces of a forgotten past, today inhabited by jackals and harpies.

Of all the ancient and glorious cities of this neglected realm, Phasis is the only one to still have some civilization and a Roman contingent. Throughout the centuries, this beautiful and wealthy colony turned into an isle as the coast slid and the mouth of the river became a swamp. Today its sturdy walls and the harsh surrounding lands that prevent large horse-borne armies from entering have kept it safe from the Huns. Here is stationed a contingent of legionaries and tens of vessels from the province army of Armenia, making it possible to reach it from the Pontus, Byzantium, the mouth of the Danuvium, or the coastal cities of Moesia.

At the same time, this Imperial Armenian outpost is surrounded by crowds of enemies, and Custodes who want to move from there to the rest of Colchis should take every measure they can to move in enemy land made even more dangerous by the threat of beasts, venomous animals, and monsters of all kinds.

THE SIGN OF PROMETHEUS

To the east of the Black Sea, beyond Colchis, between the steppe and the steep hills to the north of Armenia, stand the mountains of the Caucasus, believed by the ancients to be the edge of the world, and to which it is said Prometheus was chained by Jupiter. Although today we know that the edge of the world is much further east, these mountains appear a dire place indeed, imbued with a divine aura. Their peaks are tall and steep, with titanic buttresses and flanks that delve into the very roots of the world. Snow covers them, and the winds blow as ferocious as blades. The fame of these imposing peaks, which have numerous myths and legends associated with them, spreads all across the surrounding lands.

In the caves of the Caucasus seem to live Troglodytes and giants, the last remains of the armies of the Titans during their ancient war with the gods, capable of surviving the passage of time because they could hide from the eyes of the gods in those vast and deep caves. Only pictographs and bones thrown out of the entrances of the caves prove their presence, and I cannot imagine a deed more frightening than delving into those crags to verify if those prodigious creatures are myth or truth.

And even higher, where no two-legged creature could live, is where roost enormous birds with sharp beaks and talons as hard as steel, called "Promethean Eagles", apparently descendants of the bird of prey that for years fed on the liver of the wise Titan, inheriting some of its characteristics.

The toughest and most fearless travelers, who have made their way between those treacherous heights, thick with monsters, and the peaks watched over by those murderous eagles, claim to have seen right in the tallest ridge the "Sign of Prometheus", a recess dug by the Titan in his centuries of punishment on those mountains. Such drive to reach the sacred bluff is not born only of a passion for history or faith in the Titans that Scythians, Sarmatians, and Thracians might still have. More confidential reports claim that at the top of those enormous ridges are still the remains of the chains that bound Prometheus to the wall, made of the strongest steel of the Titans. Any shard of such metal could be worth ten times its weight in gold, say the smiths of Tomis and Adrianopolis, as it can be made into phenomenal armor and weapons.

THE PASTURES OF THE HORDE

The last descendants of Attila today rule the Huns and the smattering of nomads who owe him tribute and ride in his horde. They hail from distant regions, beyond the Maeotian Swamp and the Caucasus, and consider their domain Scythia, Cimmeria, Sarmatia, and any other steppe to the northeast of the Black Sea, up to the edge of the world. Among all the foreign enemies of which our geographers have known, excluding the cannibal Troglodytes and the Maeotians, the Huns are without a doubt the most barbarous and savage.

Their skin is sun-darkened to the color of leather, and their complexion is sickly. They have tough limbs, a thick neck, and an ugly and hunched torso, more similar to bipedal animals than men, deformed by their daily practices rather than fate, and by the natural characteristics of their kin. Their living is so backward they need neither fire nor condiments, feeding on roots, herbs, and the raw flesh of any animal, which they heat by keeping it between their thighs and the backs of their horses, reserving cauldrons and fireplaces for great occasions. They wear only one robe that they never wash, nor change until it is but tattered rags. They do not practice agriculture nor have a stable home, but wander constantly like herds of cattle, horses, and wagons, stopping only for the night or small periods of time in their crude tents.

When not busy campaigning, the Hun hordes are scattered about the region to the north and east of the Black Sea, divided by federations, tribes, clans, and families on as wide a land as they can occupy. Instead of tending to fields or building dwellings and fortresses, they spend their time riding, training for war, shooting their bows, and vexing whoever is within hand's reach, not recognizing any law of hospitality.

Their religion is primitive and bereft of an organized cult. They worship the sky and the four winds, and fear death and the Demons. Their sacred men are recognized as they are born, by signs and omens, and from that moment onward their relatives wrap their heads in sacred cloths to deform their heads into elongated shapes. Such practice induces in them hallucinations, visions, and the gift of prophecy, at the price of robbing them of the capacity to properly express themselves.

It seems they wait for nothing more than the sound of the war horns to gather once again, taking their horses, as squat and deformed as they are, to swarm into the civilized lands, covering the plains for miles on end with formations, packs, and groups, ready for the direst massacre.

Defeated, although not killed, according to the official version, decades ago, Attila the Scourge of the Gods has been the greatest enemy of Rome and civilization of this century, and his curse has still not been dispelled yet even after his defeat. For decades his raids and conquests, barely stemmed by our walls and legions, have crashed like a storm of pain and blood onto the whole Eastern Prefecture and the northern reaches of Asia, at the cost of hundreds of thousands of victims.

His two-legged wolves have massacred, destroyed, and burned anything in their path, except those cities and kingdoms that have paid a worthy tribute in gold or opposed them with a tall wall of stone and steel. Under his banners have gathered all the nomads and pillagers of the known world, and the treasure piled in his tents or hiding places are as many and as wide as the devastation he has brought to the civilized world, and even to the Gothic and Germanic barbarians, noble and merciful in comparison.

The Horde of Attila and his sons is today the most terrible danger clashing its weapons at our borders, and the storm of steel it brings is not mundane. The priests of the sky accompanying his troops join forces to unleash storms of thunder and sleet on our soldiers and defenses and gusts of sharp winds against our formations, and the power of lightning seems to be in their hands.

THE GREAT FOREST OF THE WORLD

Traveling beyond the borders of the Empire, to the north of the Danuvium and the Black Sea, one does not find only hostile people and hordes of pillagers. As there are no proper roads, and villages and towns are few and far between, from the northern limes of Dacia spreads the savage wilderness of Europa, to the eternal frozen lands of the Hyperboreans, beyond the borders of Scythia and the known world.

Other than the occasional barbarian settlement and the sighting of some solitary hunter or group of warriors, these lands are dominated by ancient forests, almost never touched by an ax, oak, maple, beech, poplar, and linden above all. Immense rivers flow from the north and snake between these savage lands, crossing cold plains, open prairies, and thick forests.

Animal life here is free, varied, and unchanged for millennia: bustards, skylarks, eagles, badgers, foxes, and beavers live there in great quantities, while in the river valleys stretch swamps and mires, bursting with life.

Numerous nameless or forgotten monstrous creatures live in these lands, ever darker and more desolate as one grows closer to the Hyperboreal lands. The best known of them is the *Agnus Scythicus*, or Plant Lamb. It is an enormous and deformed tree with appendages similar to wooly lambs that it is even capable of moving and making bleat. As the unaware prey strikes these baits, they explode in a hail of needles and toxic fluids that paralyze the victim and drop them to the ground, where the monster covers them in vines and roots and slowly feeds on them. If they manage to survive the treacherous ambush, such a lucky traveler will learn that not all evil comes to harm, as the remains of the Plant Lamb are sought after by diviners and prophets.

Other than griffons, slithering dragons, and ferocious centaurs, some of the most common encounters of these lands are elk, bear, bison, aurochs, and wolves, present in their most common variants as well as the terrible and ancient ones, from the dawn of the world, and mighty stags, gifted with antlers so large they make the most magnificent of bows.

With such wondrous tools are armed the Amazons, huntresses and warriors sometimes spotted by the scouts traveling there. Their origin is mysterious. If there is a realm populated only by these followers of Nemesis and Diana, lost and hidden in the plains of Scythia, we are not meant to know of it. Never has one of these explorers, rare to meet and even harder to convince to engage in conversation, revealed the existence of their own domain. Like those of myth, all of them prefer to fight to the death or take their own lives rather than being forced to reveal their secrets.

The Amazons of Scythia are proud warriors, elusive and skilled, but their secret is not yet known to us. Perhaps they have a sacred sisterhood that gathers in the savage lands after suffering at the hand of men, or there really is a prodigious country inhabited by viragos. Whatever it is, they honor the tradition and the fame poets have attributed to them. With their antler bows, spears, and animal skin clothes, they are much more dangerous than the Arimaspi that still plague those lands.

Of the latter we have already spoken elsewhere. They are akin to cyclopes, but even more savage and primordial. Instead of living on the coasts or the rocky isles, the Arimaspi wander among the endless plains of northern Scythia, to the edge of the world, similar to Troglodytes were it not for the one eye on their forehead. Their build, once said to be like that of the cyclopes, is today almost human, although their features have remained grotesque (for their profile, see page 114).

The only place where they are still supposedly numerous is on the flanks of the Montes Riphaei, the chain that surrounds the north of the world and on top of which is Borea. These frozen regions are said to hold great amounts of gold and offer a place for the mighty ice griffons to roost, the only beings to fly between the cold storms of the north. However, as far as we can remember, nobody has ever made their way so far north and then back to tell us.

THE DAUGHTERS OF ECHIDNA

A world of endless plains and forests extends beyond the borders of the Empire, and the ancient lands of Scythia have no true civilizations or kingdoms worthy of such name, up to the ancestral lands of the Goths and the Hyperboreans. There wander pillagers more wolf than man, ferocious beasts, and lawless barbarians. But there is a great plenty of prodigious beings, gods, and monsters. Primordial creatures similar to the Balauri of the Dacians or the men-wolves and the bloodthirsty masters of the night are mentioned in the legends that are told under these menacing skies, as well as many others unique to these lands.

Among the numerous terrifying legends of these regions is that of the daughters of Echidna.

The Scythians seemed to claim to be the descendants of Hercules, supposed to have lain in bed with the primordial serpent goddess to retake the horses she had stolen. The heroic deed led to the birth of Skythes, the father of the people named after him, and of three daughters.

While Skythes took after his noble father, the son of Jupiter, his sisters inherited the monstrous appearance of Echidna: women from the waist up, long serpent coils below.

This brood of monsters spread over the years, and today is easy to find in the region, where they feed on travelers and nomads, when successfully ambushing solitary preys or small groups. The daughters of Echidna have the proportions of normal women but are gifted with enormous powers, making them one of the most feared local threats (see page 120).

STEPPES AND REMOTE FORESTS OF SCYTHIA - ENCOUNTERS TABLE

Roll 1d20 whenever deemed necessary. These encounters can happen both during the day and at night.
Add 5 if the Custodes are far away from the limes.

d20 Roll	Event
1-10	**Nothing of note.** Under the shining sun, these lands look even beautiful. Praised be Diana!
11	**Hunters.** A group of barbarians with bows carefully stalks prey. They probably do not want to be bothered, but could have useful information about the surroundings.
12	**Wild horses.** A herd of wild horses is startled by the arrival of the Custodes. They are magnificent animals, and on a successful **De Natura** roll (DT 9) the group may capture one. If the roll is failed, the Custodes are attacked by Horses (2:1, see Core Rulebook).
13	**Underground house.** A strange tunnel opens in the sea of grass. Exploring it, the group finds roughly hewn corridors and rooms with low ceilings, reinforced walls, and stone columns. It is not a tomb, but rather a house of the ancient Cimmerians. The walls are carved with depictions of divine Giants.
14	**Slavers.** A group of Androphagi barbarians drags women in chains, Roman citizens kidnapped from within the Imperial borders to be sold as slaves. They must be freed! Use the profile for 1:1 Androphagi Warriors (1:1, + 1 +1 Chieftain, see page 108).
15	**Arimaspi.** These nomads sit around a campfire and can be mistaken for common barbarians upon first observation. Moving closer, however, one notices their imposing size and the one eye instead of two. The Arimaspi (see page 114) are peaceful and attack only if provoked. Gaining their trust allows gathering information on the surrounding lands (De Societate, DT 6).
16	**Giant Deer.** The Custodes spot a deer with enormous antlers that would make any hunter, and even the goddess Diana herself, proud, although capturing it definitely will not be easy. Use the profile for Deer (see Core Rulebook), but with DV12 (instead of DV8).

1d20 Roll	Event
17	**Agathyrsi.** A group of blue-painted barbarians is on the march to the mountains of Dacia. They are Agathyrsi (see page 109), returning home after who-knows-what dragged them so far away from their lands.
18	**Flooding river.** An imposing river blocks the Custodes' way. There are no bridges or fords nearby, so to cross it the group must find a creative solution. Falling in such cold and strong waters could be quite dangerous.
19	**The Goth ritual.** A sorcerer is performing a ritual in ancient ruins, escorted and helped by Goth Warriors. Use the profile for Barbarian Warriors (1:1, + 1 Barbarian Priest, see Core Rulebook).
20	**Abandoned village.** The Custodes spot a deserted village. It is hard to say what manner of barbarians live here, for they have disappeared into thin air. The embers still smolder in their hearths, and the group can still see the traces of everyday life.
21	**Griffon.** An eagle-like shriek comes from the heavens. A Griffon (see Core Rulebook) dives onto the group. probably. Its nest is probably nearby and may hide something valuable or interesting.
22	**Amazons.** A group of mounted warrior women passes close by, the fearsome Amazons (see Core Rulebook), leaving the group little time to decide whether to fight or speak. These women are hostile to men and the DT of **De Societate** rolls of male characters is increased by 1 level of difficulty.
23	**Plant Lamb.** A strange tree, different from all others, seems to have its appendices end in the shape of sheep or lambs (see page 112).
24	**Daughter of Echidna.** From a pile of stones looking like ancient ruins emerges a terrifying creature, half woman and half serpent. The Custodes must fight it to not become its prey (see page 120).
25	**Hyperboreal Giant (see Core Rulebook).** The ground shakes under the group's feet and the air suddenly turns as cold as winter. In front of the Custodes appears an enormous being dressed in the manner of a barbarian warrior. Is he hostile or willing to talk?

PART IV

TERROR ON THE BORDER

Now that we are done with the geography of these two noble and tested provinces, Byzantium, and the lands beyond the limes, I wish to report in the following pages news and oddities about the populations today living in Dacia and Thracia, as well as delving into their greatest supernatural perils.

I begin this excursus by drawing your attention to one of the first things one can notice upon arriving here from Italia or elsewhere in the Western Prefecture: the locals are scared, a feeling that never abandons residents and travelers. It can manifest as a latent and diffused wariness, a constant sense of dread, or an actual and constant fear of what is to come, to the extremes of the terror and panic that grasp the most sensitive. The fear, the wait for a threat that snakes into the shadows or looms over the heads of all like a pall always ready to fall, and the ever-present anxiety for an evil about to strike are the main emotions and instincts in this region.

The buried ruins of prehistoric rulers, the shelters and fortresses of the Horde, the tombs of the Cimmerians, and the lost and sunken cities that dot the bottom of the sea are also the places where have slept for centuries lords of darkness, blood, and death, occasionally leaving their slumber to bleed and exterminate the populations around their tombs.

The Custodes called to intervene in Moesia, Dacia, and Thracia, along the Danuvium and the coasts of the Black Sea must be ready to live with such a constant feeling of anguish and use it to spur or convince those they deal with, without ever yielding to its grasp. All the magic traditions, the occult mysteries, and the dark practices that I am to rapidly explore in the coming pages feed on and into this feeling of unease and fear, ultimately the main key of interpretation for everything that you are about to read.

THE SHADOW EMPIRE

The most remote among the myths that our scholars have gathered and recorded in these regions is told by the Avars around their campfires and supposedly dates back to ancient times before any calendar, when in Aegyptus were founded the primordial cities, and Thinis was the capital of lost Stygia. In those times before time, in the lands at the heart of the world, between Asia and Europa, rose another prehistoric and forgotten Empire, the only rival of that from Africa that rose in the forgotten jungles around the Nilus.

Its name, at least the one the Avars prefer, was Erebus, and apparently it was ruled in the beginning by a divine duo, children of the darkness itself: Axiokersos and Axiokersa. This mythical domain had a unique characteristic: although its people were shepherds and led their herds along trails of the world, between shrines of stone and colossal megaliths erected to tell the motion of the stars, the days of the year, and migrating paths, they lived underground.

First, they simply inhabited the caves, like the ancient forefathers of mankind. Then, however, instead of building homes and structures with the bones of the earth on the surface, they kept digging their dwellings deeper and deeper. And as outside, under the stars and the sun chariot of Apollo, ruled beasts, Titans, and giants, and others slowly came to conquer lands and forests, they instead chose to descend more and more to the heart of the world.

Soon, their individual dwellings were joined by underground tunnels, and their isolated nooks and crannies became connected into small settlements. Then these familial settlements became villages, families became tribes, and their leaders joined in a common senate called the Enlightened, after the special lights they carried in that domain of perpetual shadow.

And when, over the course of the centuries, the people Erebus became numerous and fearless, instead of returning to the surface and conquering kingdoms and lands under the sun, they built their cities and domains underground, their leader taking the title of King of the World, Bringer of Light, and Shadow Emperor.

These weird legends tell that one day the Enlightened met the kings of Stygia, who had traveled from Africa to make their acquaintance, admiring their knowledge in building stone towers, tombs, and underground fortresses. But war soon broke out between them, and people of Erebus fell. In vengeance, the rulers of Stygia butchered any living being walking the lands of the King of the World, stole his herds, tore down the towers, pinnacles, and obelisks of the Enlightened, and collapsed forever the accesses to their subterranean world, sealing off Erebus forever between the mists of myth and legend.

That day, however, the Shadow Empire did not die. Many of its people were lost, and others scattered about the world, but the memory of those times and their unity survived. Whether there are still the Enlightened and a King of the World sits on his underground throne is impossible to say, as the myth is now too old to tell it apart from that of the infernal regions and their divine rulers. But some of them stayed on or returned to the surface, surviving the massacres, and scattered about the world. Some of them became the Calibi, a great people of craft, the first to learn the secrets of sky iron. Others would later give life to the endless clans of the Scythians and the Sacians, who besiege our Empire. Some claim the now-extinct Cimmerians were their successors and that their Empire of the Cimmerian Shadows was nothing more than the last known form of that ancient civilization.

Of course, the Avars claim, too, although only to the most trusted of foreigners and always in hushed tones and with glares of suspicion, to be the last earthly descendants of the King of the World and those people, and that secret dynastic lines are perpetuated in the most guarded tents of the horse lords.

The descendants of Axiokersos and Axiokersa are supposedly recognizable by their fair skin and blond hair, although those of purest blood of their ancestors have hair, skin, and eyes so fair they appear white or silver, a legacy of that sunless age spent in Erebus.

They seem not to be trying to restore what is now lost forever. and yet they implicitly consider the entire extension of the ancestral domain of their ancestors as their rightful land, by primordial and non-negotiable rule of inheritance, and believe their Empire has never died. They still perform rituals and follow secret hierarchies that date back to the dawn of time and the King of the World, and secretly behave wherever they go as if that were their domain. The Empire, they claim, still exists "in the Shadow", meaning its people, like a shadow that lies below or stands above the power of warlords, kings, and empires, including the Roman. They claim that the domain of the King of the World's being secret, hidden, and invisible to most does not mean it does not exist. The horses, at times, seem to feel the faint call of the King of the World and are restless some nights, throwing tantrums from which they divine prophecies and teachings.

FROM THE FURTHEST REACHES

The savage and less Romanized lands of the two provinces are still the domain and prerogative of savage and barbarian tribes that have incomprehensible traditions and rituals and keep resisting Imperial rule, the customs and good practices of civilization.

The worst among them are the Androphagi of Dacia, faithful to their abominable traditions and capable of the most heinous acts against travelers in their land. Unlike them, the Agathyrsi, who live in the peaks of the Montes Sarmatici and Carpathes, are less brutal, and their only wish, a reasonable one at that, is to be left alone. The priests of the Gods of the Winds of Dacia and their dark and invisible lords are not yet a danger to the stability of the region, more like a latent local threat, especially if they are robbed of any of the sacred steeds born of the winds that they raise between the mountain peaks. If such blasphemy happens, they are capable of casting storms of thunder and snow on all the surrounding lands.

The Daursi, a strong and united tribe that occupies a relevant part of western Dacia, are much more dangerous. They have been quiet in recent times and have not engaged in explicit attacks against Rome, and yet this worries me even more. The Daursi are few, it is true, but control their lands with expertise and have shown great ferocity and skill in battle, not to mention the blood and dark faculties they have inherited from the Daigerna. They are a fire that simmers below the ash, ready to burn again, and numerous mysterious events have happened in their lands: disappearances, murders, nocturnal gatherings under the moonlight, and grim rituals. The Daigerna, and even a few Pack Leaders, hide among them for sure, and their calm is but a facade.

Beyond the western borders of the province are the small domains of the so called Free Dacians, our formal allies, protection and a buffer against the Vandals and the other Germanic alliances. Allowing them to organize as they please, outside of our borders, was a wise and careful decision, and has contributed to lessen attrition and conflicts. Are they completely trustworthy? Of course not, as their most violent and traditionalist souls still dream of the fall of Rome. Are they a danger, then? No, and their purpose as bait for the most violent intentions is where it should be: outside of our borders.

And yet, all these threats that singularly are not dangers to the stability of Imperial rule in these lands are localized hurdles the Cohors Arcana could be forced to fight in their day-to-day operations. Mysterious disappearances, murders, blasphemous rituals, and macabre findings can very well require official investigations and secret infiltrations of the Custodes in their lands.

THE GREAT GODS OF THRACIA AND SAMOTHRACE

Olympians and Titans are not the only gods fighting over the world, this we know by now. The Italic regions that were the cradle of our civilization teem with deities, and so does every other region our Empire extends its shadow over.

Those who have visited the lands of Aegyptus, Mesopotamia, Persia, or far away India eventually lose count of the thousands of gods worshiped there, and the traditions of the Cretans, the Christians, the Jews, and the Syrians burst with new and ancient cults, often incompatible with one another. Not to mention the more bizarre and unmentionable beings that sometimes surface into our world from the nameless void or the abyss...

The Great Gods honored for centuries by the Thracians are a parallel and earlier creed and religion to that of the Olympians. Their Great Mother is our Demeter, and Hecate Zerynthia is present in our Official Cult, too.

Another matter are the Kabeiroi, the Dattili, the Telchini, the Cureti, Cadmilo and Elektra, Axiokersos and Axiokersa, and all the others. Their cult relies on a strong mysteric component, numerous divine secrets that have origin and application in Thracia.

However, a report on these ancient deities, sometimes harkening back to the dark times of the Shadow Empire, is included in the one about the province of Achaia and not repeated here. Read those papyri for more.

THE SCHOLA NIGRA AND THE CULT OF ZALMOXIS

Faith in the Black God is a constant in the Dacians, and virtually none of them would ever renounce it. Even when, in a city or in of precise dispositions, they worship or offer proper tribute to the gods of the Official Cult, their souls hide an unrelenting devotion to the god of their people and all their ancestors.

Because of this, those that to us could look like bizarre and grim sorcerers, the Scholomancers leading the most esoteric and secret branch of the cult, to any Dacian represent the guardians of the traditions and faith of their people.

Scholomancy and the more grim and disturbing aspects of the cult of Zalmoxis are formally banned in Dacia, but it is also true that our bureaucrats have the secret faculty to prevent their persecution and allow the locals to perform their rituals and blasphemies to avoid causing new revolts in the province. The unspoken agreement between the prefects of Rome and the cultists of Zalmoxis binds the former not to meddle with the business of the latter, as long as they do their things far from the cities, in secluded caves and crags or among the remains of their ancestral seats, and neither offend nor attack Roman citizens.

Of them and their activities we know much. We know their preferred gathering places are the ruins of the city of Malva, in Old Dacia, but we choose not to disturb their meetings and what they teach their acolytes. We also know they travel the countryside and small villages, far from the vigilance of Rome, and offer their wisdom to the common folk against the diseases and dangers of their lands. There have been in the past plenty of sightings of Scholomancers who have fought Daigerna or vampires, and even sided with the Custodes against mutual enemies.

This is to say that this vigilant peace formally has held for numerous years, but at times has been strained by excessively meticulous Roman administrators or particularly ferocious and retrograde Scholomancers, haughty enough to openly challenge us.

Are they, then, after all, a threat to the Empire? Of course they are! Although the wiser among them have realized they must steer clear of our cities, they are the true fire simmering below the cinder of the province and the only faction capable of gathering in arms the entire people of Dacia against us. In addition, their dealings with infernal powers and their Black God every day risk causing great damage and evil or summoning forbidden forces and entities that could escape their control.

And if for now they keep their heads down and do not openly challenge us, they search day and night for the lost limbs of dismembered Zalmoxis to resuscitate him and unleash his power on us. The secret location of the Kogainon, the lost recesses where are kept the mortal spoils of the god are their deepest burrows and, in part, the object of their searching. Should Zalmoxis ever return, his wrath would be devastating, with the lost blades of the Titans that once cut him to pieces long lost. What weapon or shield shall we face that dark wrathful god with, when that happens?

THE PARADE OF ORPHEUS

Among the numerous quirks of the Thracians, mistakenly associated only with violence, wild riding, and barbarous life, is a great predilection for the gifts of the Muses, in music and song. Dionysus and his Maenads, Corybants, and processions of gods and mortals caught in mystical ecstasy all originated from this land, or so the Thracians say. Also Thracian was Orpheus, the best known and most skilled of the Aoidoi, second in the musical arts only to the divine Apollo.

Thracia is still today a land of skilled cantors, diviners, prophets, seers, and mystics, and all of those arts are attributed to the Muses, Dionysus, and Orpheus himself. One of the most feared and respected secret coteries of Thracia is the Thiasos, "The Parade of Orpheus". This extremely insular group was apparently founded by the successor of Orpheus, his son and disciple Musaeus, and explicitly professes the mystical doctrines of its predecessor, the devotion to the arts of the Muses and the secrets of the magic songs of Thracia. It is open almost exclusively to Thracians of confirmed blood or particularly virtuous individuals, and entails numerous years of formal teaching and apprenticeship, eventually culminating in a sacred recognition that makes them initiates of and protected by the Muses and the other mysterious deities of their creed.

The powers of the Aoidoi of the Thiasos are fabled, most likely exaggerated, and shrouded in legend. It is said that their enchanted music, Aoide, can charm men, animals, and even inanimate objects, give auguries with the precision of Apollo, turn themselves and others into animals like Dionysus could, and drive them insane as the followers of the god. It is also said that they have the blessing of Kotys and can face as equals their dark spirits and even the ancient vampires of their land.

AOIDE AND SCHOLOMANCY

In Dacia and Thracia, the Custodes can come into contact with two new magical disciplines, the prerogatives respectively of the members of the Thracian Thiasos and the Schola Nigra of Dacia.

Aoide, the magic song of the members of the Thiasos, belongs to the followers of Orpheus and his teachings. This ancient magical technique is based on music, harmony, and song, and its formulas are hymns, carmina, and secret odes.

Scholomancy is the discipline of controlling the storms and winds, walking on clouds, and using charms against many of the frightening creatures of Dacia.

For their relative rituals, see page 100.

DEMONOLOGY

Demonology is a branch of sorcery widespread among the Goths and their foederati. This cult of the Demons is the prerogative of a new religious brotherhood that has recently enjoyed success, approved by the aristocracy as well as the plebs for its benefits. Enemies of the priests of their old gods, these filthy and vile sorcerers wander between the courts of the kings, using runes, charms, and invocations to the Underworld to call forth prodigious effects in battle, as well as in the dark of night.

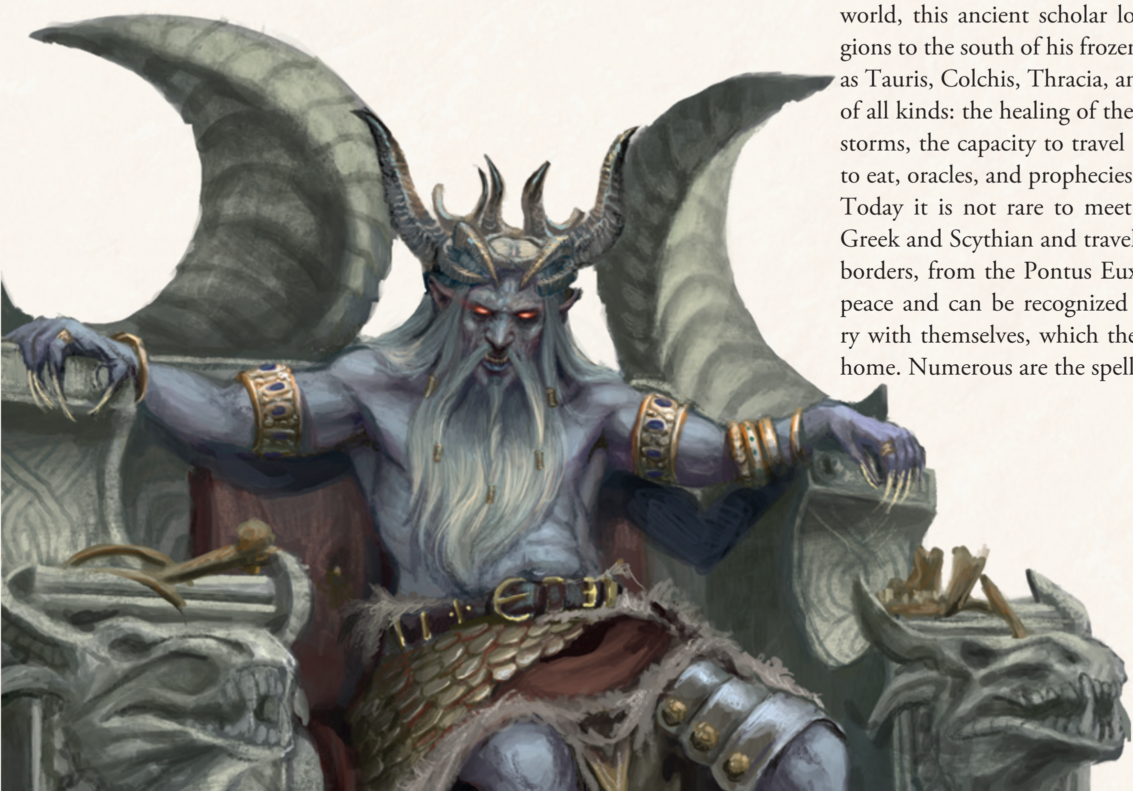
Their art is not as powerful as the divine blessings we can face it with, but it is subtle and treacherous, striking in ways we are still not trained to deal with. Gothic sorcerers worship powerful and malicious Demons, described by those sorcerers in the most minute of details in their powers, spheres of influence, and summoning rituals. Their arts are the polar opposite of our Theurgy, the latter being the most effective magic against them.

At the head of their infernal hierarchy is rumored to be the demon **Vassago**, described as an old and powerful man with dark complexion and eyes of coal, lord of demonic hosts. Whatever the truth is, Gothic sorcerers and their dark powers are the main threat from this people, who otherwise could have been allies, clientes, or foederati of Rome, useful against the others who besiege us on all sides.

From what we are able to understand, the spread of this dark art began at the time of Atanarich and Emperor Valens, around a century ago. Defeated and pushed back numerous times by our legions, understanding that his people could never have prevailed against Rome, not even in a thousand years, the Rex Gothorum made a dire decision. Instead of yielding to the Empire, proposing himself as an ally or foederati, or simply accepting the defeat, Atanarich summoned to his court the most abject and desperate of the ancient sorcerers of his people and gave in to the lies of the demon they worshiped. Rather than surrendering, the Goths made a deal with shadows and infernal powers. Vassago whispered words of vengeance and victory to the ears of the king.

And Atanarich chose to pay his price! In a terrifying ritual of death and massacre, in which hundreds of human lives are said to have been sacrificed, Vassago was summoned, after which he taught his new servants how to call forth Demons and granted them his powers. The Gothic nobility became his elected people, and many of their old priests were demoted to barely sorcerers and servants.

In the first battle after the unholy pact sealed the promise between the Demon and the Goths, Valens and all those under his command were defeated and massacred by claws of darkness and blades of shadow. Thracia fell again prey of the Goths, and since then demonology is a practice they hold in great esteem.



THE ETERNAL GOD OF THE HEAVENS AND THE ORDER OF ABARIS

Scythians, Huns, Sarmatians, and many others practice an archaic religion, often based on the cult of their God of the Sky, Wind, and Storms. This Asian version of the divine father Uranus is not paid an attention equal to that of the other primordial, Titanic, and Olympian gods, as any form of cult is seemingly often absent, with worship left to the individual's feeling and the recital of few and short prayers, more akin to wards than sacred hymns.

For all intents and purposes, they worship only the eternal blue sky above the endless prairies and invoke it for strength, blessings, and protection from all the evils that curse their lives.

Fire, lightning, winds, rain, springs, the spirits of their ancestors and of animals - all these things the nomads of the plains believe full of divine presences, like our ancestors, although these deities are so weak they are barely honored, if not with rhymes and warding verses.

They fear only Demons, and so also their dead, specters, shadows, afflictions, and diseases, and the lord of all these evils they call Ordogus or similar names. The Great White Wolf of the Sky and the Black Wolf of the Underworld his sons are, the most terrible among the divine manifestations of these populations.

If these doctrines appear distant and primitive to us, some scholars and diplomats have learned numerous good lessons and useful doctrines from the travelers of the Order of Abaris. It is said that Abaris was a priest and a traveler of the Hyperborean lands, devoted to Apollo and well versed in the magical arts and prophecy, who lived between Cimmeria, Scythia, and Thracia at the time of the foundation of Rome.

Instead of staying in the lands of his ancestors, at the edge of the world, this ancient scholar loved traveling and exploring the regions to the south of his frozen regions, and supposedly went as far as Tauris, Colchis, Thracia, and Athens. Of him are told prodigies of all kinds: the healing of the sick, the taming of earthquakes and storms, the capacity to travel at great speed and without the need to eat, oracles, and prophecies.

Today it is not rare to meet Abarids, wise explorers who speak Greek and Scythian and travel across the lands to the north of our borders, from the Pontus Euxinus to Hyperborea. They come in peace and can be recognized by the gold arrow they always carry with themselves, which they claim never loses the direction of home. Numerous are the spells and oracles they know.

THE SWORD OF WAR

Made of gleaming steel and perfectly balanced, it is said it was found by a shepherd in the grass of Scythia. Fearful of the artifact, too perfect to be made by mortal hand, the man brought it to his chieftain, who offered to his own chieftain, who then presented it to his lord, who gave it to Attila himself. The Scourge of the Gods was awestruck by the weapon, believing it an omen of his greatness, and since then has kept it at his belt and used it in every battle, where its adamans blade has devastated enemies and broken iron and bronze.

Those who have had the privilege of watching it from close up and have survived its wrath remember noticing letters carved on the blade, words in our language: *ENSIS CALIBVRNVS*, which could confirm it is indeed the sword of the god Mars, forged by the Calibi.

The Sword of War is a magnificent adamans Ensis (see page 99 for the rules on adamans equipment) with Damage 10 and Difficulty 8, which grants its wielder Fate Roll on De Bello rolls. A Custos wielding the Sword of War keeps their Fate Roll on De Bello, even if their Pietas score is 0 or if they had caused the Roman gods to be indifferent or hostile to them.

THE KABEIROI AND ADAMANS

According to Dacian and Thracian myths, these regions were occupied in an ancestral past by the ancient Gods of the World that predated even the Olympians: the Titans. Pillars of the four corners of the earth, lords of the mountains, deities of the oceans and winds, children of Uranus and Gaea, lords of giants, cyclopes, and Hecatoncheires, these most ancient of beings dismembered Zalmoxis in Dacia and attacked Dionysus in Thracia. They had their homes and cities in the mountains and had tamed the Anemoi, the harpies, and the Arimaspi of Scythia.

The Kabeiroi, their allies, forged for them extraordinary weapons with the iron fallen from the sky the ancients called adamans, and the secret of such steel was taught by their followers, the Calibi, to the Thracians, sealing the tragic fate of the Cimmerians. Such indestructible weapons, used at times even against the gods themselves, were forged with now-lost secrets and spells. The last of these artifacts still known is the Sword of War, belonging to Attila, the Scourge of the Gods.

If there are smiths today who know the secret handed down through the centuries, if ruined parchments or crumbling tablets report the formulas, or if divine artisans are still today willing to teach such techniques, we cannot know. There are, however, rare and scattered in the furthest reaches of Thracia, other fragments of that ancient alloy, spear tips and chains bolted to the rocks of the Caucasus or the caves of Tauris. Those who recover such weapons and armor can harness their power, although not understanding their origins.

THE RED WOLVES

So much does the Lord of the Horde love the Sword of War that he has founded a cult and a cadre of loyal followers in the name of this prodigious weapon. The Red Wolves, the personal guard of Attila, is made up of the blood brethren of the Scourge of the Gods, who have sworn total devotion to their lord on their lives and souls. So loyal and depraved they are that in the admission ceremony they behead and eat their dearest relative. Their name comes not only from their status as the most ferocious and loyal of the Huns, of which Attila would be the very pack leader, but also from the ritual of blood they perform to become a link between the White Wolf of the Sky and the Black Wolf of the Underworld.

The Red Wolves are supposed to have great powers and feral traits, similar to the Italic Versipellis, the northern Berserkir, and the Daigerna of Dacia. The full extent of such barbarous practices, however, is not yet known.

THE HUNS AND THE HORDE OF NIGHTMARES

Although kept in check by the influence of Attila and his Wolves, the Lords of the Horde are a formless swarm of warlords, murderers, and pillagers, without discipline or organization. Previous defeats, the internecine vying for control, and the lack of organization in bringing death and destruction on the Empire have so far been the largest obstacles to their conquest.

THE SON OF ATTILA

Csaba
Value: DV4
1 die: De Scientia
2 dice: De Corpore, De Magia, Hit Points, Ratio, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Bello, De Natura, De Societate
Hit Points: 8
Weapons: Spear (Damage 6), Arcus (Damage 6)
Protections: Lorica Squamata (Protection 4)

Special Abilities: Acute Senses, Stealthy

The best steel of a hundred and a hundred more generations of senators and praetorians of the Empire, and of Hun leaders and kings, lives and is perfected in the last son of Attila, born of his last concubine, a Roman princess. Csaba is but ten years old and already is an exceptional fighter, scout, and diplomat, only limited by his young age.

Dark-skinned, but with western traits, dark hair, and fair eyes, Csaba is raised and trained by the Horde of Nightmares as the potential future conqueror of the world and at the same time protected from the many assassins that would have an interest in killing him, whether they are Imperial, rival Huns, or even jealous relatives.

The last three attempts that managed to breach his personal tent were thwarted by the boy himself.

Their goals and methods are the simplest one can imagine: gather their forces, find new allies, and charge on Thracia, devastating anything on their way to Byzantium. Once the province has fallen and the Eastern Capital of the Empire has been conquered, the path to Rome would be open and the Empire would start trembling.

As the three elder sons of Attila are now dead, the Lords of the Horde have split into factions and independent bands, all looking for legitimization as the supreme leader. Among them is Prince **Csaba**, son of Attila, too young to take the lead.

Although still weak and with different ambitions from those of the other chieftains, at times exotic, languid, and bizarre, nobody has yet been able to take him out of the political game, as he is protected by the Horde of Nightmares, which takes him along on their travels. About this faction, we barely know anything certain. Among the hundreds of tribes in the Hun horde, it is the most feared and bloodthirsty, a swarm of raiders and pillagers shrouded in legend that seems to be among the most powerful the tribal lords can command into battle.

According to our spies, the Horde of Nightmares is but a thousand warriors, but its ferocity terrorizes even the other Huns. What manner of ungodly monsters they must be if even the most ruthless killers on the earth fear them?

Their main difference from the other tribes, formations, and brotherhoods in arms of such a savage people is that they do not worship the gods of sky and wind everybody else honors, but are sworn to the underworld of their myth and the demon that rules it, **Ordogus**. Although his servants are completely different from those of the vampires, some believe Ordogus is none other than one of the most ancient among the Blood Gods, who made his way in ancestral times to the steppe and he has now taken them over with the power of blood.

According to the rumors, the followers of Ordogus do not live in families and have no dynasties. They are men and women with neither tribes nor relatives, who ride far from the other Huns, hiding in remote places or rushing to the edges of the world. Even more disturbing is the rumor that they ride only on Nightmare Horses, monstrous and carnivorous beasts that the legends ascribe to the ancient king Diomedes and in battle turn into barely controlled monsters. When the Lord of the Horde calls, they descend from their dwellings onto fields of battle, riding at night and living during the day in black tents, to reach the front lines and strike on their own. Not even the other chieftains can challenge them, and their presence is considered a necessary evil and a dark curse that the Huns are willing to unleash on their enemies whenever it is impossible to win in any other way.

Meeting the Horde of Nightmares has become a figure of speech even among these godless pillagers when referring to the worst misfortune, and waking up in proximity of their black tents is the direst of omens.

THE SONS OF CALIGULA

The members of the sect known as the Sons of Caligula, some of whom have been recently captured in Thracia, have revealed some things about their cult and hierarchies and vague legends on the Blood Gods who have skulked in the shadows for centuries to vex humankind, reported below.

Concerning the sect, it is supposed to have originated at the death of Emperor Caligula, killed by one of the Custodes Arcani, the praetorian tribune Cassius Cherea. In that moment of tragedy and liberation, when that deranged despot was finally taken out of the picture, a faction of his faithful found a way to bring him back to life and schemed to feed it to the cold corpse. Such an unholy concoction was the very cursed blood of the Strix, the Nosphoratus known as Abyzou, offered by that monster out of the desire to own the third Emperor of Rome. The plot was successful, and the perpetrators of the machination had their wish granted. Caligula returned to life, although as a spawn of the Strix and a reanimated corpse. His clientes had their lord back, and the Strix now had another tool to infiltrate the heart of the Empire.

Deranged in life, Caligula became even worse and bloodthirsty in undeath. To avoid pointless massacres and being exposed, the Strix led that crazed spawn to the city of Miletus, where the young Emperor still had followers worshiping him like a god. Secluded and fed in the dungeons of the temple, willed by him years before and where he was now worshiped as in life, this spawn of the Strix gave origin to a clan of vampires and followers that boasted from the beginning senators, army hierarchs, and aristocrats. The promise of prodigious powers and immortality, as well as that of mutual favors and sect support, gave the spread of the organization a great push. In the following centuries, it pervaded Italic and eastern society, especially the provinces of Asia and Thracia.

Although the Strix does not spend much time in Dacia and Thracia, and the heart of the sect is in Miletus, in the new and secret temple (the first was destroyed centuries ago by the Arcani), we know that the Sons of Caligula have found a strong regional presence, especially in ancient and wealthy centers like Byzantium and Salmydessus. One of their goals is to recover the Scepter of Atlas, lost somewhere among the sunken ruins of the Black Sea, which Caligula wants for who-knows-what nefarious project, although their true objective is to completely infiltrate the Empire and make it their secret domain. Today the sect has lost its fundamental advantage, secrecy. We know of its existence, history, and some of its members and seats in Thracia, as well as the location of the temple and the name of the Blood Goddess behind it.

And yet they are still powerful and dangerous, infiltrated into every level and with unknown numbers. It is plausible that they will stay on the defensive for the coming years, hoping to be forgotten and returning to the shadows for a generation, but it falls to us to strike at this threat and neutralize it before that happens. However, it is rather likely they will strike with utter ferocity whoever investigates them to discover more about their members or influence.

THE COURT OF KING DECEDITUS

"When the underworld is filled to burst, the dead return to tread on the earth," so goes a famous Dacian saying. This doctrine, refuted by our priests, is behind a terrible phenomenon that still afflicts the most war-torn regions of the province today. The campaigns of Traianus in the province, launched after a series of betrayals and defeats that all but enervated the will of the Emperor and his legions, cost the Dacian people hundreds of thousands of dead between those who fell in battle, the numerous following suicides, starvation, vengeance, hunger, and disease of the first years of conquest. Such endless death, which halved the population of the region, soaked the entire province in devastation and blood, to an extent rarely attained elsewhere.

Tens of thousands were the specters haunting the countryside, thousands the reanimated dead and the Gelloi that appeared and began wandering the desolate lands and the battlefields, hundreds the haunted places, and tens the shadows and powerful entities that took over destroyed cities and ruined castles. One, and one only, the Pale King, controls them all, in his grim palace at the center of the destroyed capital of his people, once the main metropolis of a living kingdom, today an immense necropolis ruled by the dead.

The last king of Dacia, Decebalus, still haunts Sarmizegethusa as Deceditus, the King of Spirits. In the old abandoned capital, the living have not been admitted anymore for centuries, and a feeling of grim and gloomy danger afflicts those who even try to close within miles of it. The most foolhardy among the Custodes, who have managed to sneak into the ruins and to return to tell the tale, reported sights of the Exercitus Mortuorum of Deceditus. They speak, those brave fools, of a macabre nocturnal court of shadowy advisers and princes around an empty throne, of a legion of ghosts arrayed for battle, and even a crowd of diaphanous apparitions that light the ruins with faint spectral gleams.

But the power of the Grim Sire is not limited to his lost city and the remains of his butchered people. All the shadows, Lemuri, and Larvae of Dacia belong to him, through ancient legacy and occult domination. The passes and fields where the ancient battles were fought, the open sky ossuaries, and the swamps and mires where entire fleeing populations drowned are today under his control and infested by his diaphanous servants. His spectral knights run at night on destroyed fields and abandoned lands. Even the wandering dead that walk the earth with heavy and dragging feet and the ancient formless shadows from the fall of the realm are under his influence and do his dark bidding.

What are his plans? What schemes are hatched in the dark? Few still doubt the will of the King of Tears: swing the fate of the ancient war, have his vengeance against Rome, repay the ancient massacre of his people with a new massacre, and retake the entirety of Dacia under new banners of death.

Still, today his armies his armies are wanting, his power lacking, his domain insufficient. But year after year his troops have swelled, his throngs grown. Every Dacian who dies at the hand of Rome turns into a warrior or rider in his hosts. Each new victory for the descendants in life of his people, rebels, pillagers, or criminals that they may be, turns in a victory in death for Deciditus and his own. When the size of his army is sufficient, the army of the dead shall march against that of the living, for one last, terrible, titanic battle. We must stop the King of Tears before this happens. We must stop him now.

THE BLOOD GODS AND THEIR SPAWN

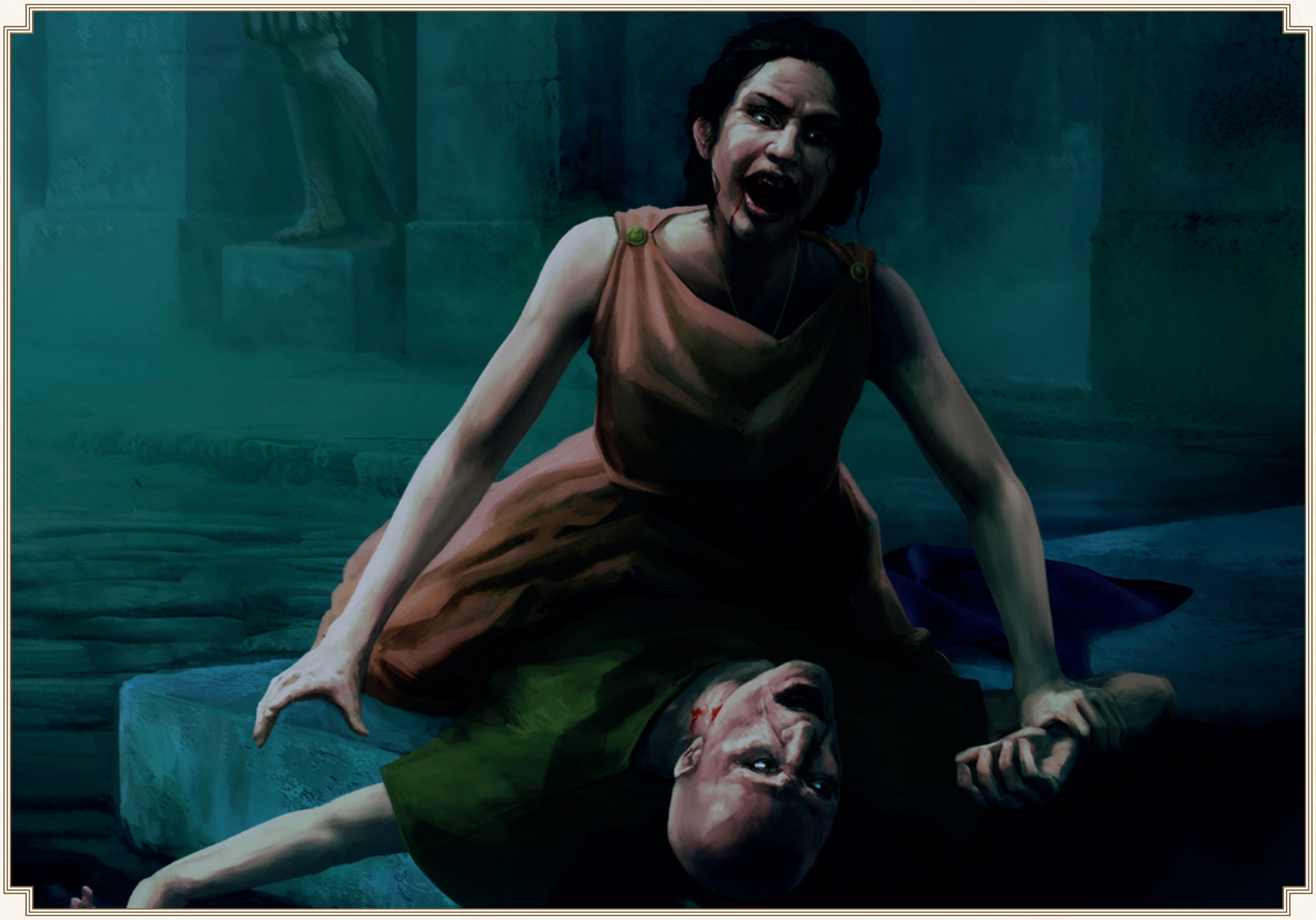
In spite of the occult plots of the King of the World and the followers of the Black God, Demons, Gothic sorcery, the nightmarish hordes of the Huns, the ghosts of Deceditus, the Cimmerian Shadows, the Daigerna men-wolves, and the monstrous Balauri, the most ancient and dire plague of these lands is without a doubt another: vampires. The most ancient Dacian and Thracian traditions who live in the shadow of the Montes Carpathes and Sarmatici, the most imposing massifs of the two provinces, mention with great fear these beings, from the most powerful and forgotten Nosphorati to the abject Gelloi that feed off the dead and dying.

These remote superstitions gain crimson urgency under the light of the recent discovery of the sect of the Sons of Caligula, infiltrated deep into the heart of Rome, while the horrible events that have happened in Gades in months past have brought up an abyss of dire secrets, of which up to now we have had only vague hints, confused suspicions, and imprecise reports. The reasons behind our lack of information about such episodes and, by extension, the entire emerging picture seems to be born of the infiltration of the Sons of Caligula into the Empire. For decades, they seem to have erased the traces and information on the Nosphorati and the ancient vampires who apparently have walked the earth for ages, spying and wishing for our blood. Who, then, are these beings?

If the last pieces of information we wrenched from the Sons of Caligula are to be believed, the mysterious Blood Gods who came from the east at the time of the Great Flood of Deucalion and Pyrrha are descendants of Lilith, the Shadow Mother, whose breed is as ancient as that of the primordial gods, but of different and blasphemous origin. In spite of the vague beliefs about such antediluvian beings, some of which could still today be at the head of such a timeless threat, more powerful and ancestral than those ancient vampires we believed up until recently to be the deadliest among them. It was they who at the beginning of time kept men as cattle, hunted or raised to feed them, and have generated a long spawn of descendants and servants.

And if this plague seems to have spread all over across the Empire and to the savage lands beyond our borders, apparently it has infested some specific territories for a much longer time, Mesopotamia and India, perhaps being the lands of its origin. However, Dacia and Thracia have been their strongholds inside our borders.

These deities of shadow, of which Vassago of the Goths and Ordogus of the Huns are two of the most powerful examples, supposedly ruled over humankind as wolves among sheep, unbeknownst to them since the very beginning of time, beginning in the obscure bloodlines of the mortals those of their victims and descendants.



THE CARPATHIAN VAMPIRES

The "Blood Gods" could very well be another name for those that today we also call Nosphorati, "Bearers of Pestilence" according to the dialect of Gades, where in months past their terrible revelation occurred. These ageless monsters are powerful and relentless, masters of their blood spawn, as they serve their Dark Mother. But if Lilith looks to be only a story to scare children and their mothers, the Nosphorati are as deadly as they are real, and their tracks have been found leading right to those two provinces.

These "Bearers of Pestilence" are so called because each of them seems to have spawned a well-defined kin, with traits and talents similar to those of the progenitors, as physicians believe every strain of plague to be different from all others, with recognizable effects.

MORMOLYCE, THE QUEEN UNDER THE FOREST

All the vampires of Dacia supposedly fall under the influence of Mormolyce, the "Queen Under the Forest", the only Nosphoratus with stable residence in the region. At least a dozen ancient vampires are her spawn, the greatest terrors of the Dacian people, who have plagued their lands and bled them for a thousand years. The best known among them is rumored to be the Lord of Crow's Hill, a feral-looking vampire called Stradrax, known for his extreme ferocity.

APLETOS, THE BASILEUS OF BYZANTIUM

Of Apletos is told that he has slept for millennia in the heart of Byzantium, his true hidden and terrible power unknown. His blood kin probably have bled the people of the immense capital of the prefecture for centuries without drawing attention, for fear of losing such a vast hunting ground. Where Mormolyce and her court are hunters, used to preying upon wanderers and refugees like wolves, Apletos and his own are breeders. They protect their flocks from external attacks, defend the land from other vampires and dangers, and consider those places their pens to exploit. When Attila moved with his hordes through Moesia to the gates of the city, who were the auxiliaries who came to save us and pushed back even the Black Horde? Who was the mysterious general Basiliscus at the head of that white and gold armored contingent? And where did they fall back after the deed? The Emperor has covered up those facts to avoid giving explanations to the people. Now, this is even more disconcerting, is it not? We believe Basiliscus, the "Small King", could be an ancient vampire, the direct spawn of Apletos and his regent in the city, sent by the slumbering progenitor at the head of his own kin to save their herds. The mission was successful, true, but at what price?

Another of the kin of Apletos answers to the name of Axivarna, the ancient vampire who has stained the nights of Ulpia Traiana with blood and now has supposedly retreated somewhere between Moesia and Thracia, in some ancient ruin of his kin, or even Philippopolis. Whether he was sent by Apletos into the territory of his "sister" or he is a forsaken and independent vampire we still do not know.

ABYZOU, THE STRIX

While the first two Nosphorati I mentioned are tightly connected to a specific place, the central region of Dacia and Byzantium respectively, Abyzou "the Strix" is instead a wandering creature, who roams between the eastern reaches of Dacia, Moesia Inferior, and Thracia.

The Strix, whom rumors claim to be a wanderer of great cunning and age, is said to lead the Sons of Caligula, founding a blood cult around herself instead of looking for solitude or keeping to furtive behaviors. As such, she has manipulated hundreds of power-hungry individuals into the hierarchy centered around Caligula that she leads. As has been recently discovered, the Sons of Caligula can be found everywhere in the Empire, even in Rome, where they often hold high office. They are also greatly diffused in Dacia and Thracia, where they have some of their main operative bases and hideouts. The vampires, the Gelloi who take care of the cult and all the followers assigned to the outer circles of the sect, never stray too close to the dark forests of Dacia, but infiltrate its cities, especially the wealthier ones, and can be found in the major centers of Thracia, including Byzantium. However, their influence is limited, and their necessity of avoiding the attention of the servants of Apletos impellent.

CHOMODRACAENA, THE DRAGONESS

The one other known Nosphoratus in these lands is Chromodracaena, "the Dragoness", an abject and deformed being said to have fed on the blood of beasts, other vampires, and even Balauri, from whom she could have obtained her most peculiar traits. Today Chromodracaena is said to have hidden in the depths of some dilapidated underground temple or ruin in Moesia Inferior or the lands beyond the border, surrounded by the treasures taken from her victims and the carnage of her massacres. This inhuman monster is rumored to be deformed and colossal, any human traits lost and turned into those of an enormous leech, restlessly dragging her mass between the recesses of her kingdom of filth, below who-knows-what crumbling city. Her Gelloi and vampires are the most abject of all their unholy kin, as they feed on anything at hand, even their own if nothing else is available.

OBSCURE BLOODLINES

Their servants and kin are those we call ancient vampires, like he whose deeds are reported at the opening of this document and bloodied Ulpia Traiana. Below the ancient vampires are the common vampires, who the Cohors Auxiliaria Arcana has often met in numerous missions, and that we had not yet identified as part of the same unclean family. One step lower are the worst Gelloi, servants of the most powerful vampires, corpse eaters, beings between life and death. These deviate and tainted creatures are devoted to their masters, but still capable of blending in with humans to carry out for the vampires those tasks they cannot take care of by themselves. They are often fed with the blood of their lords, to keep them under control, but when they are on their own, their masters abandon them, or nobody claims their loyalty, they become regular clients of graveyards, slaughterhouses, or places of murder, where they find their filthy sustenance.

The different vampires of these four groups mirror the supposed traits of their masters. Mormolyce's have lupine traits, and their nature is that of savage predators. Apletos' look the most human, like nobles and patricians, civilized and careful in social occasions. Strix's are similar to the nightly bird of prey she is named after. Chromodracaena's look like immense leeches, bloated and repellent beings, parasites of men, beasts, and entire populations.

Are they all a threat for the Empire? It is as terrible as it is realistic that the answer is negative. They prosper as we prosper. They feed on us, and in some case even raise us as cattle. And yet the horror they represent is enough to warrant their extinction, should we want to embark on such a campaign. Our great advantage against them is that such monsters hidden from humanity do not act in concord, each living at the head of their spawn and servants without caring what the others do. The news that Apletos and Mormolyce are somehow related or allied against external enemies has not been confirmed yet.

As such, to strike at the Queen Under the Forest it is necessary to follow and defeat her most loyal servants, track her to the Graveyard of the Ancients, and face her in the underground recesses of her forgotten necropolis. Defeating the Strix and her schemes of power requires finding the members of her sect and killing or capturing them one by one, until the mysterious temple in which she is said to reside when she does not wander the eastern provinces is found.

Chromodracaena is rumored to nest in some pit or cloaca of Moesia, and following the trail of corpses bled dry by her servants should be enough to find her, assuming such a plan is even remotely smart...

About Apletos, Basiliscus, and the other vampires of their kin, things are both simpler and more complex. They are in Byzantium, in some opulent and secret reach, and hunt in the city nights. However, their knowledge, affiliation to the powerful of the city, and all their secret plots makes them much harder to identify and excise. Should the Custodes hunt these monsters, our advice is to act in secret, never sharing one's progress or results with the local authorities.

THE WAR OF THE FIVE EMPIRES AND THE RISE OF THE BLACK CAESAR

The Sibyl who speaks with the voice of the Sun God in Apollonia once said that on the Danuvium front is fought a devastating war between five empires, compared to which all other wars will fade, and that will decide the destiny of the world.

That one of these empires is Rome's seems evident, but which are the other four? Huns, Goths, or Vandals do not have a proper empire, yet each of these confederations of pillagers and warriors could be identified as one of the five domains mentioned by the Thracian Sibyl. Each of those populations is a confederation of different tribes and peoples, who owe fealty to chieftains, leaders, and generals of all ranks, all led by a king of kings.

However, even keeping in consideration the three dire armies on our borders, whatever may be the fifth empire of the prophecy? The matter is still discussed and is the object of weary speculation. Is it perhaps the Empire of the Dead of Deceditus, which infests the heart of Dacia and grows stronger by the day? Or perhaps is it the Empire of Blood of the Nosphorati, hiding behind a daily facade of light and keeping the most terrible secrets? Or maybe it's even the fabled Shadow Empire of the most ancient legends, of which the Avars still speak, seemingly everywhere and able to deal with any problem with unique and cunning wit?

From beyond the lands of Scythia and those godless people, however, comes a new rumor about a new overlord about to unite the hordes again in a great empire. He is known as the Black Caesar, his armor made entirely of gold and adamans, the Sword of War that belonged to Attila now in his hand.

The prophecies say that, just as the Divus Caesar founded our own Empire, the Black Caesar shall tear it down, spreading destruction all over the known world. He is considered to be the ruler of an empire of darkness, blood, and death that will rise to ruin the empire of the living and crush everything under fiery hooves.

On the nature of the Black Caesar, our scholars have advanced many possible hypotheses.

Because he wields the Sword of War, one immediately thinks of Attila, kept or brought back to life by unspeakable magics or the kiss of one of the Nosphorati after his last battle, ready to conquer the world as a vampire.

On the other hand, excluding the Scourge of the Gods and the Sword of War, the rank of Lord of the Horde could be claimed by his last successor, Prince Csaba, his mettle said to be mysterious and inscrutable, the present leader of the Horde of Nightmares. Otherwise, it could be a new powerful warrior emerging from the Horde as its supreme leader.

The most dreadful hypothesis hints at a much darker possibility. Attila, whether returned or not, his sons and chieftains, and even the very Nightmare Horde, could have been used by an even darker and more powerful mastermind, one of the Blood Gods who has chosen to eventually reveal themselves. If one listens to those myths, it would be none other than Ordogus, the Hun God of Death.

Needless to say, we are extremely worried by this new dark threat looming on us all.

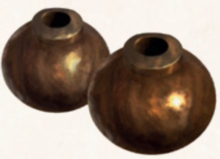
PART V

NEW RULES

This chapter covers new rules, items, rituals, and Indigitamenta as well as three new Specialties for the Custodes, easily applicable in adventures set in Dacia and Thracia. However, they can also be used anywhere else in the Empire.

NEW EQUIPMENT

GREEK LAMPS

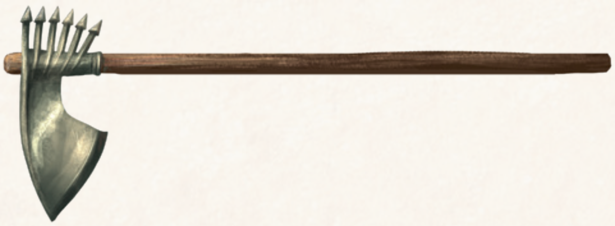


These lamps, invented by the artificers of the Cohors Arcana under the guidance of the wise Esselius, bring light to the dark of the night and fire to supernatural beings, especially Vampires...
As large as common lamps, but of a roughly spherical shape, they are made of thin ceramic that breaks on impact and can set whatever they land on ablaze.
To use them in combat, a character must make a Short range attack with a **De Corpore** roll. Those who are hit immediately suffer 1d6 points of damage and are engulfed in flames, and at the beginning of each following tempus they automatically suffer 1d6 points of damage (armor does not protect them). While on fire, the target cannot fight or take any action other than trying to put out the flames. The fire is immediately extinguished if the victim is doused heavily with water or rolls on dusty ground and passes a **De Corpore** roll (DT 6).
Greek lamps are fragile and could break easily, although when unlit they do not risk setting a bag on fire...

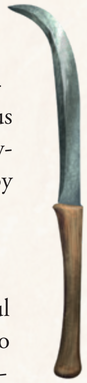
NEW WEAPONS

SAGARIS

Also called "mounted ax", the Sagaris is the typical weapon of the nomads of the steppe (Huns and Scythians), meant to be used with ease from the saddle of a horse. Particularly famous are the "fangs", the serrated Sagaris wielded by the Red Wolves of Attila.



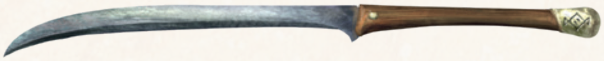
ONE-HANDED FALX



The Falx is one of the traditional weapons of the Dacians, which has fought their natural and unnatural enemies for centuries. There exists all manner of shapes and sizes, the most famous and feared of which is the two-handed. Equally as common, however, is the one-handed version, equivalent to the Ensis in use by the Cohors Arcana.

ROMFAIA

This is the preferred weapon of the Thracians, extremely useful in the mounted warfare these warriors are famous for. Similar to the Dacian Falx but with a straighter blade, it is perfect for fighting on horseback, although using it requires great skill.



NEW WEAPON FEATURES

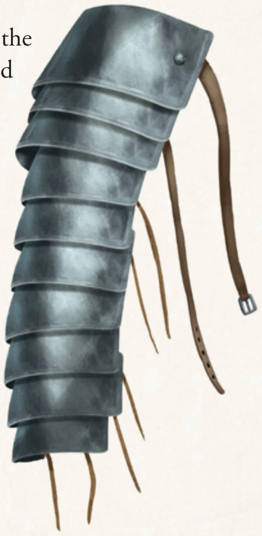
CAVALRY

Cavalry weapons are made to be easily used from a saddle. In such case, their Difficulty is decreased by 2.

A Note. *The Contus (Core Rulebook) is considered a Cavalry weapon (this special rule replaces the one in the Core Rulebook).*

NEW ARMOR

LORICA MANICA



The Lorica Manica, or Manica, is a protection for the arm made of segmented iron or bronze. It is used mostly in gladiatorial games, but legionaries began to use it during the wars in Dacia to fight the fearsome Falx, capable of biting through the Roman Scutum and dealing grievous wounds to the arms. The Lorica Manica can be used alone (as gladiators do) or to complement other protections. In the former case, it grants its Protection score only when the character wields a shield to protect the rest of their body. Otherwise, if used in combination with any other armor, it increases its Protection and Encumbrance scores by 3.

MELEE WEAPONS			
Weapon	**Damage/Difficulty**	**Encumbrance**	**Features**
Sagaris (Cavalry ax)	7	3	Cavalry
One-handed Falx	8	3	-
Romfaia (Spear-scythe)	12	6	Two-handed, Cavalry*

** new (see below)*

ARMOR	
Armor	**Protection/Encumbrance**
Lorica Manica	3 or +3*

**see description*

ADAMANS EQUIPMENT

Weapons, arrow and spear tips, and pieces of armor made of adamans, lighter and yet more resistant than steel, are much sought-after by the warriors and treasure hunters of both provinces. To find fragments of adamans, or even entire artifacts, explorers and tomb robbers delve deep into Cimmerian graveyards in dangerous Tauris, into the Graveyard of the Ancients, infested by the Vampires, and on the mountains where the Titans once lived.

ADAMANS WEAPONS

Weapons with blades or tips made of adamans halve the results of the protection rolls of their target against their damage, rounded down (unless their target is wearing adamans armor). They can also wound creatures with the Invulnerability magic power, but inflicting only half their normal Damage score, rounded down.

The most famous of all known adamans weapons is the *Ensis Caliburnus*, the Sword of War, wielded by Attila himself and on which swear the Red Wolves of his personal bodyguard.

Example. An adamans Ensis (Damage 8) is considered Damage 4 against anything with Invulnerability.

ADAMANS ARMOR

Armor reinforced with adamans gains +4 Protection against all non-adamans weapons, but its Encumbrance remains unchanged.

ADAMANS SHIELDS

Shields reinforced with adamans gain +2 Parry against all non-adamans weapons.

Note. *Should the Custodes find fragments of such heavenly metal or similar artifacts, they are bound to hand them to the Cohors Auxiliaria Arcana for study and safekeeping. However, a Custos with at least the rank of Beneficiarius who has obtained a weapon, armor, or shield in adamans during a mission can acquire the item permanently as "Prestigious equipment", or swap a previously owned piece of Prestigious equipment with this one.*

Sufficient fragments of adamans can be forged into Prestigious equipment, although smiths capable of helping the Custodes are found only in Byzantium, Tomis, and Adrianopolis, and contracting their services could draw unwanted attention...

DUAL WIELDING

Inspired by the unique two-weapon fighting style of the Dimachaerii gladiators, many Custodes include in their training techniques for dual wielding. A Custos enjoys the advantages of dual wielding only while using weapons with an Encumbrance no greater than 2 each (a Custos may dual wield weapons with a greater Encumbrance, but will not enjoy any special rules other than being able to attack with either weapon).

- A dual wielding Custos is considered to be equipped with a weapon with Damage and Difficulty equal to the sum of the **Damage and Difficulty** of each weapon used. For example, a Custos wielding both a Gladius (Damage 6) and a Sica (Damage 4) is considered to be armed with a weapon having Damage and Difficulty equal to 10.
- If the Custos has Specialities applicable to one or both of the weapons wielded, they can only apply to the roll the Specialty with the lower bonus (if the Custos has no Specialties applicable to both weapons, the bonus is 0).
- A dual wielding Custos is never considered Expertus, even when their De Bello is equal to or greater than twice the sum of the Difficulties of the two weapons.

Note. *An Assassin may apply their "Deadly Strike" Combat Talent even when fighting with two weapons, as long as both weapons have a base Damage equal to 4 or less. In this case, however, the Assassin does not enjoy the increased Damage multiplier.*

NEW MAGICAL DISCIPLINES AND SPECIALTIES

In the dark regions of Dacia and Thracia and beyond the northern limes, the Custodes can learn magical disciplines from the local sorcerers and theurgists, which they can then use in future adventures, wherever those may take them.

Note. *To each of these disciplines is associated an eponymous* ***De Magia*** *Specialty, applicable to the roll required to officiate its ceremonies.*

AOIDE

Aoide, the "Song", is the magical practice of the Thiasos, the philosophical, artistic, magic, and religious brotherhood born in Thracia based the teachings of Orpheus. As a cult, Orphism is forbidden. However, on multiple occasions the Aoidoi of the esoteric order of the Thiasos have helped the Empire in the past, so some of their secrets are nowadays taught to the Custodes to help them in their missions without it being considered against the practices of the Official Cult.

SCHOLOMANCY

The sorcery of the Dacians is a discipline between religion and magic, and is considered a forbidden cult, although its surface and daily aspects of devotions to Zalmoxis are tolerated, as long as they remain confined to the outskirts of Dacia. Its study requires many long years of apprenticeship in the lost city of Malva, and the number of the adepts of the Schola Nigra is always low. Because of this, it is hard for the Custodes to learn deep secrets and mysteries, limiting their knowledge to the control of the elements and protection against adverse luck.

DISCIPLINES AND DIFFICULTIES

Discipline	DT
Aoide	9
Scholomancy	12

NEW RITUALS OF AOIDE

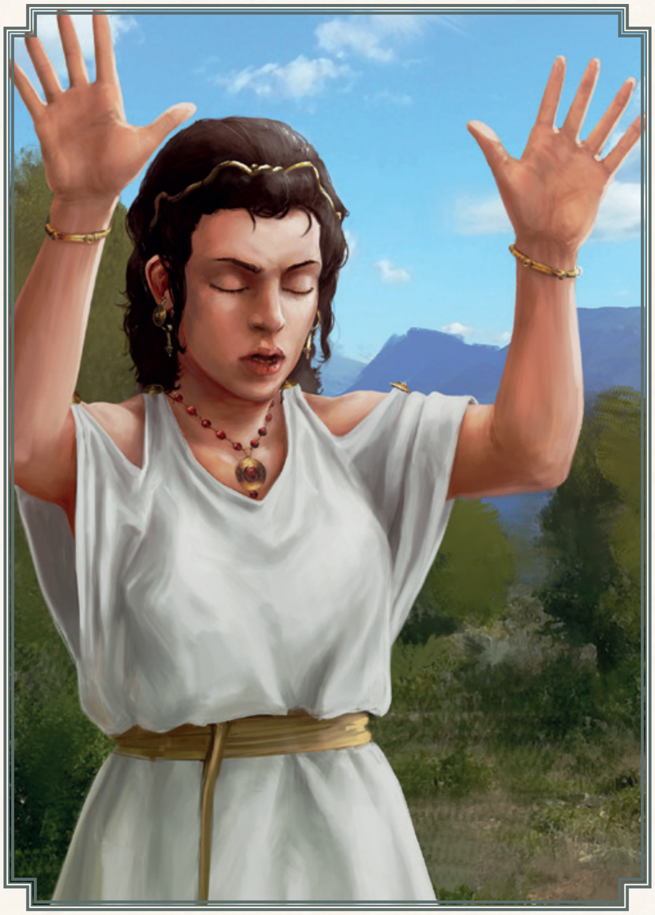
These rituals are practices that, though following the mysteries of Orpheus, can be taught to the Custodes by the Aoidoi of the Thiasos under the strict supervision of Imperial augurs, de facto belonging to the Official Cult. Their discipline is called Aoide and the Specialty applicable to their ceremonies is *Aoide*.

ARMONIA UNIVERSALIS

Discipline. Aoide (DT 9)
Cost. 9 Pietas
Duration. Short (a few minutes)
Procedure. With this ritual, the officiant sings a secret melody that makes them capable of communicating with anything, from living beings to plants, stones, water, or any inanimate object. To do so, the officiant must be in the presence of the item or creature with which they wish to communicate, somewhere calm and far from loud noises. The melody must be intoned using any musical instrument (although the lire is the one most frequently used for this ritual), which must be played without interruptions for the length of the ritual.
Response. For each Degree of Success on the **De Magia** roll, the officiant can ask one question or make a request to the item or creature. Animals, plants, and inanimate objects are always well-disposed and friendly toward the celebrants and heartily agree to answer their question or fulfill their request, if reasonable and not entailing harm. For example, the officiant may ask the pebbles of a road who walked it recently, placate a restless animal, interpret the words of rivers and trees, or convince a boulder to move aside or a ship to set sail.
Other creatures, though perfectly understanding the question or request of the officiant (in spite of any language barrier), behave as they would normally do toward them.
Cost of learning. 90 Curriculum Points

EXCANTUS

Discipline. Aoide (DT 9)
Cost. 3 Pietas
Duration. Immediate (the moment the officiant or their allies are the target of a hearing-based magic power)
Procedure. The officiant intones a song capable of overpowering and neutralizing that of the other creature.
Response. The officiant can use the result of their **De Magia** roll instead of that of any resistance roll by them or their companions against hearing-based magic powers, such as the Enchantment of Fauns and Sirens, or some Curses. Any bonuses to the resistance roll (such as those acquired by advancing along the Mos Arcanorum) apply normally.
Cost of learning. 90 Curriculum Points



HYMNUM MUSAE

Discipline. Aoide (DT 9)
Cost. 6 Pietas
Duration. From Short to Medium (up to an hour, depending on the complexity of the question)
Procedure. The ritual must be performed in a calm place, far from distractions. The officiant sings a hymn to the Muses, the daughters of Jupiter (Zeus) and Moneta (Mnemosine, or "Memory"), deities of arts, literature, and science. Then, inspired by their wisdom, the officiant falls into a trance and answers questions about any field of knowledge, chanting or speaking in verse.
Response. The higher the Degree of Success, the more detailed and articulated the answers or the greater the number of verses (usually, one answer or verse per Degree of Success, up to a maximum of three).
Cost of learning. 90 Curriculum Points

OTHER NEW RITUALS

These rituals are Scholomancy practices that follow the secret teachings of the Schola Nigra or the Orphic mysteries outside of the Imperial supervision of the Thiasos. As such, they are considered part of the forbidden cults. The consequences of celebrating a non-official ritual are illustrated in the Core Rulebook.

CAPNOBATESA (TOLERATED CULTS*)

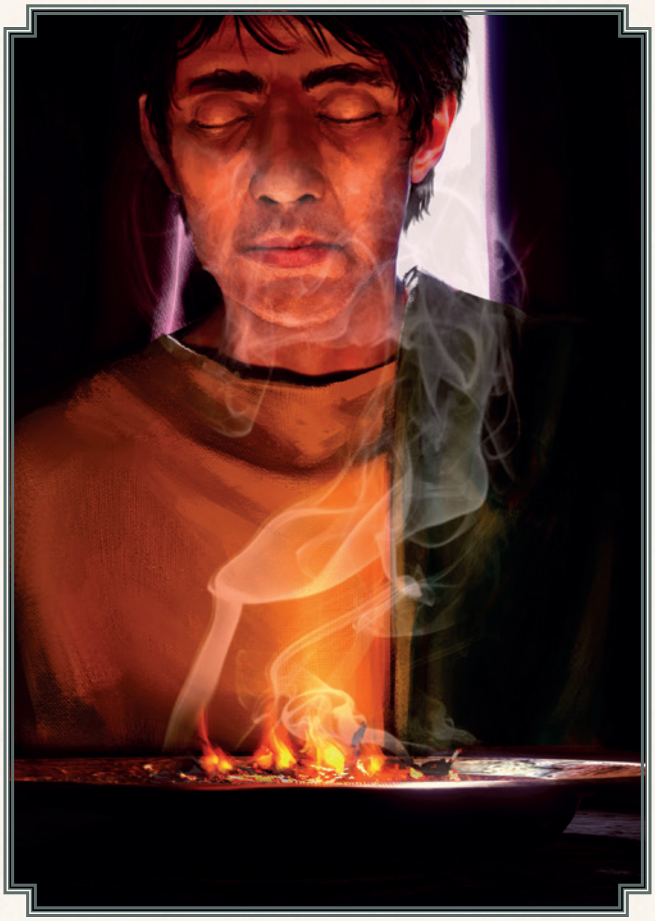
Discipline. Scholomancy (DT 12)
Duration. Medium (an hour): This duration is for the ceremony alone; the preparation process of the ritual takes at least a week (see below).
Procedure. This ritual was used originally by the Agathyrsi Capnobates, shamans of the Dacian mountains faithful to the Anemoi, said to be able to walk on clouds and winds. The Scholomancers have learned this secret and can teach it. First, all of the celebrants must consume only water, milk, and honey for at least a week.

The celebrants can eat other things, too, as long as the foods did not cause the death of the plant or animal they came from. After cleansing thusly, the participants must inhale the smoke of traditional mystical herbs for about an hour, as they chant hymns sacred to the Anemoi. Then, the officiant rolls **De Magia**.

Response. For one day per Degree of Success, the celebrants can "cloud walk". They move in any direction at twice their usual walking speed and use this ritual to climb up or down inaccessible peaks, move through swamps, rivers, and cliffs, and so on. For the entire duration of the effect, they do not suffer damage from falls. If the **De Magia** roll fails, the officiant and all the celebrants feel their limbs grow heavy, and for a whole day the difficulty of all their **Coordinatio** and **De Corpore** rolls is increased by 1 level.

Cost of learning. 120 Curriculum Points

**Note. Although the practice of Scholomancy is banned by Imperial doctrine, Capnobatesa - due to its "harmless" nature - is considered part of the rituals belonging to the tolerated cults.*



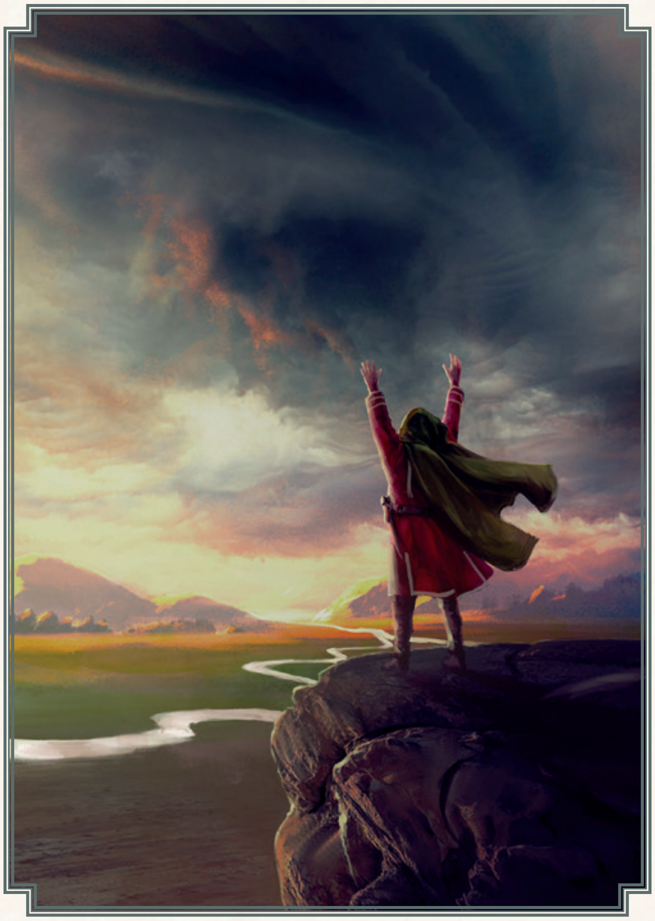
CATAEGIS (FORBIDDEN CULTS)

Discipline. Scholomancy (DT 12)

Duration. Medium (an hour): This duration is for the ceremony alone; the preparation process of the ritual takes at least a week (see below).

Procedure. This ritual is practiced by the members of numerous magic traditions, including the Abariti and Capnobates, said to be able to control weather. It was also learned by the Scholomancers of the Schola Nigra, much like many other secrets. Similarly to the preparations for the *Capnobatesa* (see above), during the week of preparation for this ritual the officiant must only consume water, milk, and honey. Then, they invoke the powerful beings capable of altering weather, such as the Anemoi or Balauri, and roll **De Magia**.

Response. The officiant gains limited control over the weather of a small area. The duration, extension, and intensity of the atmospheric phenomena depend on the Degree of Success. With a I Degree of Success, the officiant can call or stop rain and snow (if the temperature is low enough) over the area of a small field or farm for the duration of an hour. With a II Degree of Success, the officiant can unleash or halt thunder or snow and hail storms over the area of a village and its surrounding lands or on the side of a mountain for the duration of a few hours. With a III Degree of Success, the officiant has full power over weather over the area of a valley or large town for an entire day, able to summon or placate violent thunder and snow storms. The specific consequences of each effect are left to the discretion of the Demiurge.



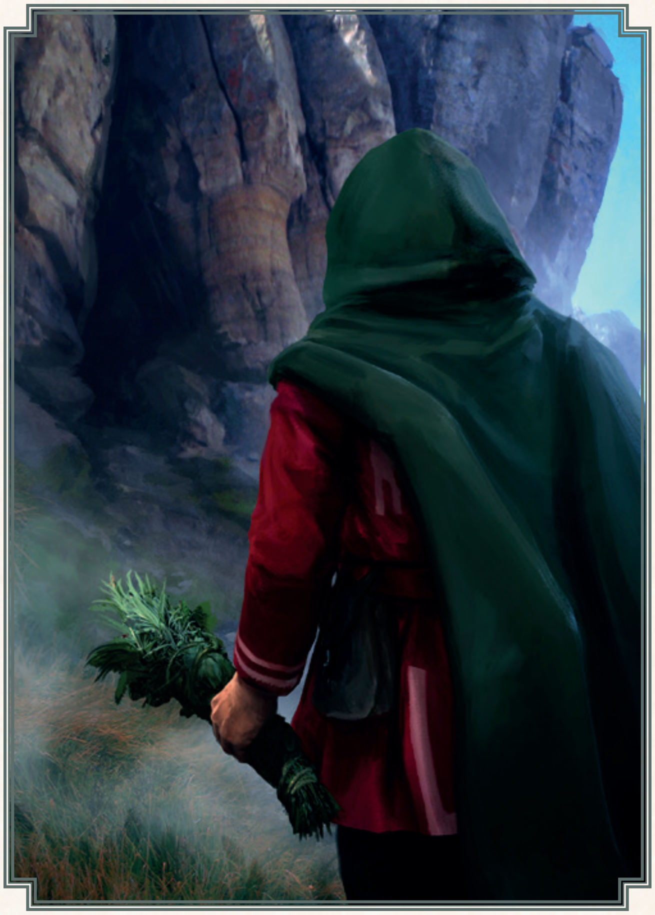
If the **De Magia** roll fails, nature turns hostile to the officiant and those in their company. For an entire day, the difficulty of all their **De Natura** and **Vigor** rolls against weather is increased by 1 level.
Cost of learning. 120 Curriculum Points

A SONG FOR THE HEROES

Aoidoi and the magic use of Song are by no means a Thracian invention, as such practice was born many centuries ago and spread rapidly all over the Mare Aegaeum. The Graeci mastered Song to enter into contact with their Heroes of old, invoking not only their aid, but sometimes their very presence in the mortal realm. This practice culminated and then rapidly fell into disuse with the Battle of Marathon in 263 AUC. That day, the Aoidoi of all Graecia took to the field alongside their Hoplite brethren to raise their song and plea to the Heroes of legends.
Historians claim that it was Theseus who answered their call, appearing in the plain of Marathon as a bronze-clad giant, key in pushing the Persians, three times the Greek numbers, back into the sea. The effort to summon Theseus was such that none of the Aoidoi survived this great ordeal, losing in but one day centuries of lore. Only one of them survived, Fidippides, the last word uttered by his magical voice "Nenikèkamen", "we won!"

LOGOS DRAKONIS (FORBIDDEN CULTS)

Discipline. Scholomancy (DT 12)
Duration. Long (a few hours)
Procedure. This dangerous ritual is learned only by the most skilled Scholomancers of the Schola Nigra, who are unlikely to teach it to strangers, as it is considered not just one of the secrets of Scholomancy but the hardest to master. Similarly to the other rituals that belong to this discipline, during the week of preparation for this one the officiant must not consume anything that has caused the death of the animal or plant (usually, it is a diet of water, milk, and honey). The officiant must then make their own way to the dwelling of a dragon (with no more than DV12) and, as they breathe in the smoke of the traditional herbs, must recite long and complex formulas of supplication in the ancient draconic language. Then, they roll **De Magia**.
Response. On a success, the officiant makes a deal with that dragon, in exchange for the granting of one request per Degree of Success (up to a maximum of three). What the dragon asks in return is left to the discretion of the Demiurge, but it should always be something significant that should not be taken lightly: a priceless relic, a sacrifice of blood, or something similar. The pact is binding for the dragon, but the officiant cannot in any way either be insolent toward it or force it to act in an unreasonable, ridiculous, or suicidal manner, all requests that are very likely to rouse the ire of the dragon. For example, the officiant can ask the dragon to use its magical powers in favor of others, be ridden for the duration of a journey (especially if winged), or simply to spare the life of someone. A dragon cannot be forced to attack the officiant's enemies without a valid reason or if the dragon's life would be put in danger. Once its task is done, the dragon will demand the pact be respected, under pain of death.
On a failed **De Magia** roll, the dragon leaves its lair, angered by the clumsy invocations of the officiant, and might even attempt to eat them!
Cost of learning. 120 Curriculum Points



TELETÈ (FORBIDDEN CULTS)

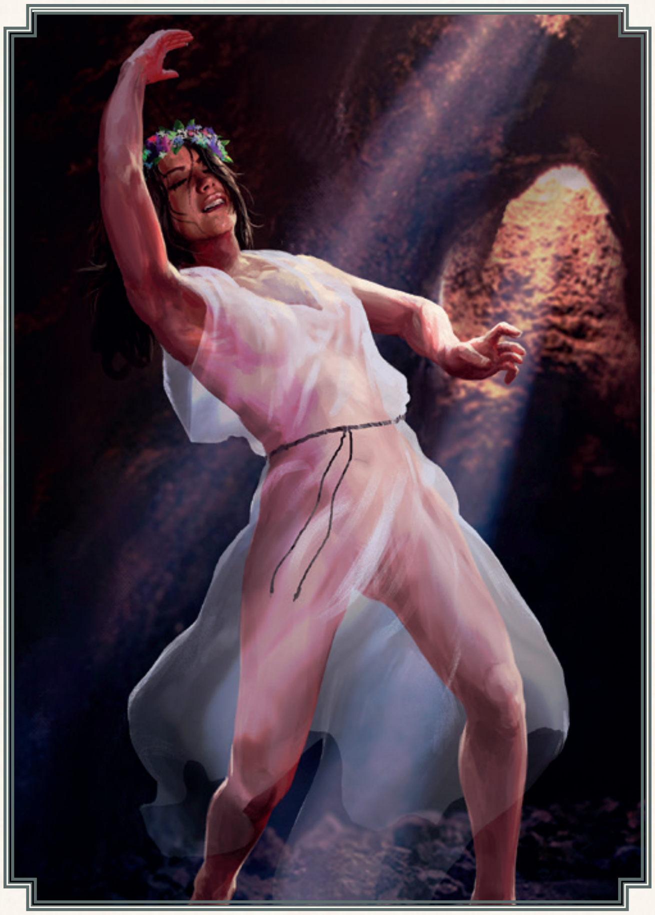
Discipline. Aoide (DT 9)

Duration. Very long (one or more days)

Procedure. *Teletè* is a ritual of initiation into the Orphic mysteries, forbidden by the official doctrine. The officiant retreats into a cave at sundown, alone or with other initiates, and for the whole night and the following day celebrates a ceremony of purification that leads them to a state of mystical ecstasy. At the end of the ritual, the officiant rolls **De Magia**.

Response. For a number of days equal to the Degree of Success, the difficulty of all of the officiant's Aoide rituals is reduced by 1 level (from DT 9 to DT 6). In the case of failure, nothing happens.

Cost of learning. 90 Curriculum Points: Being a ritual of initiation into the Orphic mysteries, the *teletè* is a privileged path in the study of Aoide, and learning this ritual lowers the cost of learning of all other Aoide rituals by 30 Curriculum Points.



NEW INDIGITAMENTA

APOLLO PHOEBUS (THE RESPLENDENT)

Cost. 6 Pietas

Requirements. To be performed at sundown; lasts until dawn.

Effect. The palm of one of the invoker's hands shines with bright, otherworldly light, in a wide cone in front of them (equivalent to a Medium distance). The invoker can lower the intensity of the light by closing the hand (unless they want it to be, the effect is not interrupted when the hand is closed, and the invoker can restore it to full intensity simply by opening the hand).

Augurs only. In any moment the effect is active, the invoker can unleash a sudden flash that *Blinds* all enemies in front of them for 1 tempus and deals 2d6 points of damage (ignoring armor) to all *Undead* creatures caught by the light. After the flash, the indigitamentum loses its power.

MERCURIUS ALIPES (THE WING FOOTED)

Cost. 3 Pietas

Requirements. -

Effect. For a day and a night, the marching speed of the group doubles. If traveling, the Custodes cover twice as much distance (or three times, if on a Forced March). If Exploring an area (or taking another prolonged action that benefits from greater speed), they can roll twice as many times for that day.

Diplomats only. In addition, during the effect all the Custodes of the contubernium can disengage from combat without rolling.

ORPHEUS CANTOR (THE CANTOR)

Cost. 6 Pietas

Requirements. The invoker is in combat against Animals or enemies with a Ratio score with DV8 or less.

Effect. The invoker chants a soothing supernatural hymn. All Animals grow calm, while enemies capable of hearing the invoker must pass a Ratio roll (DT 6) or stop fighting, rapt by the sound. The effect ends after 3 tempus, or if any of the charmed enemies is attacked (who then act and fight normally).

Augurs and Diplomats only. As above, but the enemies can have up to DV10, and the DT of the **Ratio** roll is increased to 9.

NEW INDIGITAMENTA OF THE DI INDIGETES

EQUITUS THRAEX (THRACIAN RIDER)

Virtus. Coordinatio

Cost. 3 Pietas

Requirements. Although the Thracian Rider is not an Italic god, this Indigitamentum works exactly like those of the Di Indigetes (see Core Rulebook), but can be invoked only by Custodes either hailing from Thracia or blessed by the Thracian Rider himself (see page 57). The difficulty of the Virtus roll for this Indigitamentum is based on the distance of the invoker from Thracia (see table below).

Effect. For a number of tempus equal to the Degree of Success of the roll, the invoker automatically passes all **De Natura** rolls relevant to riding. For the same duration, all Damage multipliers the enemies of the invoker might add against them and their mount are reduced by 1.

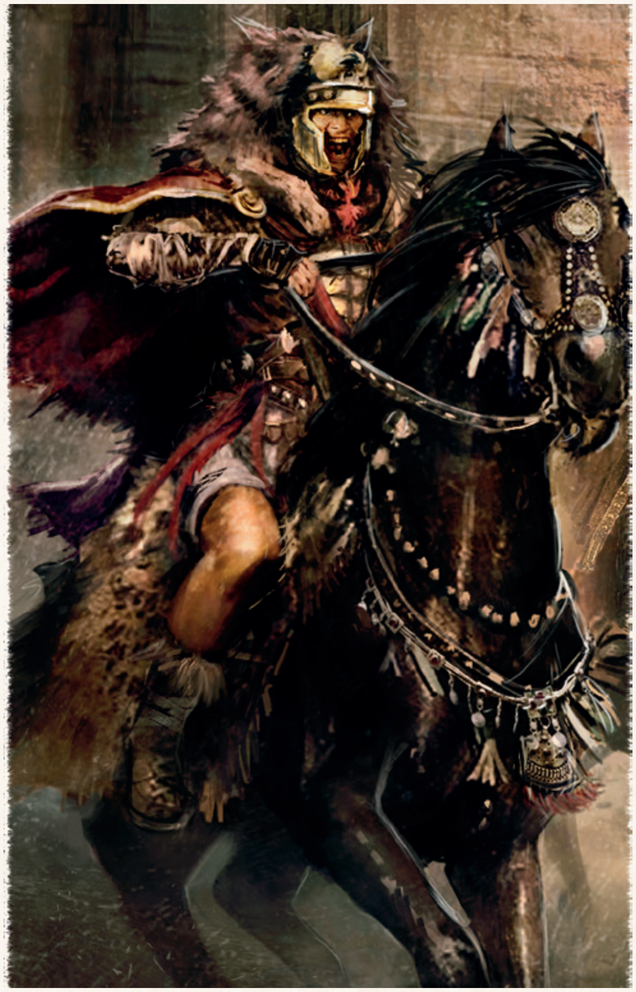
DISCIPLINES AND DIFFICULTIES

Location	Difficulty of the Coordinatio roll to invoke the Thracian Rider
Within Thracia	DT 3
Within the Prefecture Orientalis	DT 6
Within or beyond the Imperial borders	DT 9

NEW SPECIALTIES

LAW (DE SCIENTIA)

Rome has always ruled with the strength of the gladius and the authority of its laws. Every citizen knows the law of Rome is sacred and that breaking it has dire consequences. This Specialty covers the many laws, edicts, and codes emanated back in the times of the XII Tables, allowing characters to quote articles by rote and to hold their own in a public trial (both in the Forum and the Basilica) in any role. The character also knows the venerable but now obsolete laws of the people who are part of the Empire (or have been in the past).



LITERATURE (DE SCIENTIA)

This Specialty allows the capacity to recognize and quote sections of the works of major poets and writers both present and past. The character is also familiar with the writings of Homer, Vergilius, Ovidius, Horatius, Cicero, Plautus, Titus Livius, Martialis, Aeschilus, Sophocles, Euripides, and many others. This Specialty allows efficiently searching for specific volumes in the great Imperial libraries, such as Alexandria's, Ephesus', Byzantium's, and, naturally, Rome's, as well as writing in a style fit for the context of the recipient of any letter to conjure feelings such as piety, love, anger, trust, fear, surprise, and joy.

BUREAUCRACY (DE SOCIETATE)

This Specialty allows navigating the intricacies of Roman bureaucracy, indspensible to keeping the Empire working. It can be applied to know which office can provide which documents, to find specific papers in any of the immense administrative archives (there is one in every major city, in imitation of the Tabularium of the Urbs), and to understand whether the functionary the character is dealing with is corrupt or could be.

PART VI

NEW MONSTERS AND NPCS

This selection of new human, animal, and monstrous enemies includes all the supernatural beings, beasts, and generic and specific characters mentioned in this volume. Also included are a new special ability and a new magic power.

NEW SPECIAL ABILITIES

BLOODTHIRSTY

At the beginning of a combat tempus, the creature can delve into the melee throwing caution to the wind or in the throes of ruinous fury. If they choose to attack in this way, during that tempus both their Damage multiplier and the ones of the enemies they are engaged in combat with are increased by 1.

NEW MAGIC POWERS

WEATHER MANIPULATION

Some beings can control the weather over limited areas, calling or banishing clouds at will and causing storms of all kinds. The creature can activate this power at the beginning of any tempus, only once per combat or scene, to summon a tempest. The storm can be called forth during the day or at night, on land or sea, and under any weather condition. The area is subject to a mighty storm of thunder, hail, or snow (depending on the season) that lasts for 1DV tempus, inflicting the *Blinded* condition (see Core Rulebook; the difficulty of the **Sensibilitas** roll to avoid *Surprise* is reduced to DT 6) on any opponent without winter gear, and inflicting 1d3 points of damage each tempus (ignoring armor).

NEW NPCS

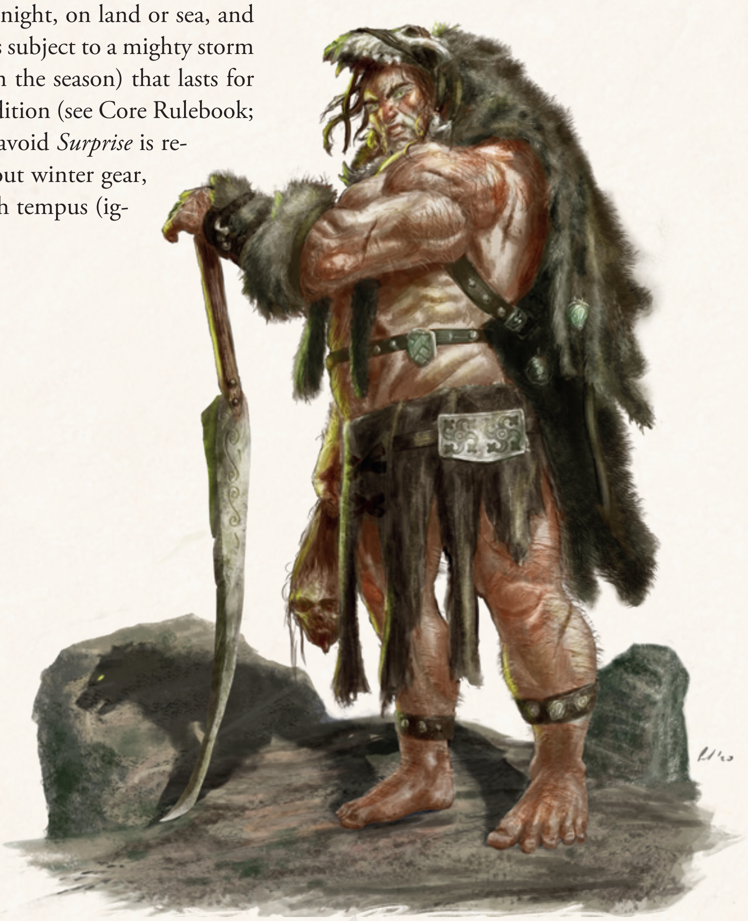
The majority of the NPCs of the Core Rulebook are perfect for Dacia and Thracia. For example, Brigands, Barbarian Champions, Barbarian Warriors, Mercenaries, Mounted Nomads, and Animals of the Core Rulebook are perfect to represent Vandals and Goths, Hun raiders, brigands and bandits of Dacia and Thracia, and also wolves, jackals, and bears from the grim forests and plains of these lands.
Here are presented a few typical characters of these two provinces and the lands beyond the border, in addition to the base ones.

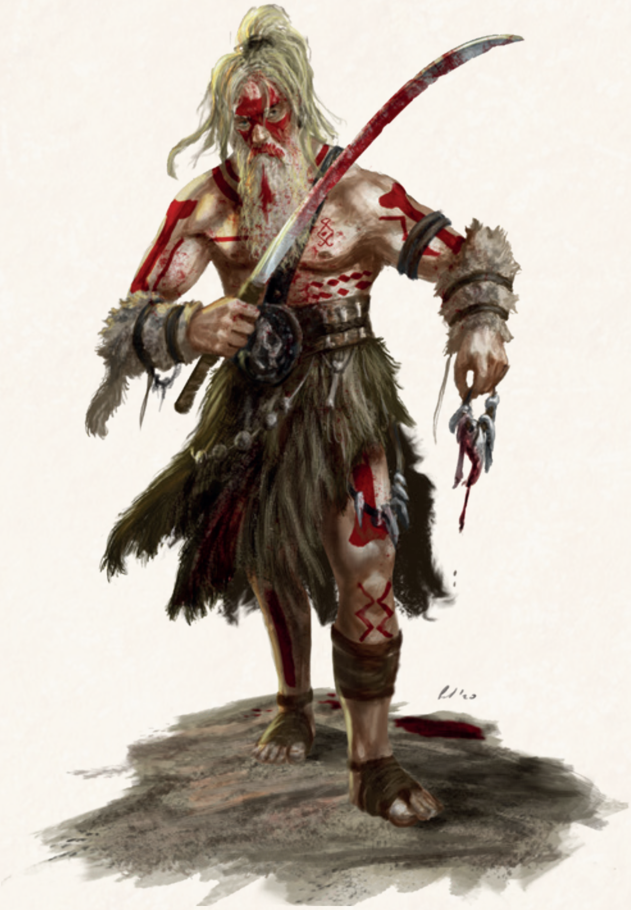
BARBARIAN NPCS

ANDROPHAGI AND DAURSI WARRIORS

Average Value: DV6
1 die: Ratio
2 dice: De Bello, De Corpore, De Natura, Sensibilitas
3 dice: Hit Points
Hit Points: 18
Weapons: One handed Falx (Damage 8)
Protections: None

Special Abilities: Bloodthirsty





Chieftains *have DV8, dress in the skins of wolves and other dangerous animals as a sign of prestige (equivalent to a Corium Lorica, Protection 3) and wield mighty two-handed Falxes (Damage 12).*

The abject Androphagi of the north of Dacia, eaters of men and lawless raiders, and the Daursi of the western lands, brutal and bound to the Daigerna, are what is left of two ancient tribes, now almost extinct and numbering but a few hundred people. In their own ways, when they do battle, they are savage, ferocious, and beast-like. The Androphagi are similar in behavior to the Troglodytes, although of Dacian constitution and build, filing their teeth into fangs. The Daursi have no need for such practice to look more bestial, often inheriting lupine traits from their Daigerna heritage. In battle, both tribes use the Falx typical of their people.

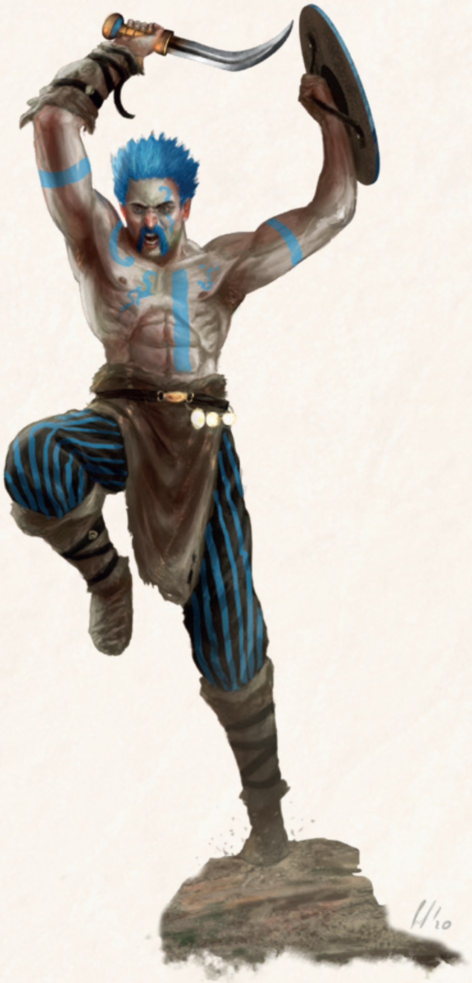
AGATHYRSI WARRIORS

Average Value: DV6
1 die: Ratio
2 dice: De Bello, De Corpore, De Natura, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Bello (Dive), Hit Points
Hit Points: 18
Weapons: Sica (Damage 4), Angon (Damage 5)
Protections: Parma (Parry +1)

Special Abilities: Dive*

**To portray their peculiar skill at ambush, when the Agathyrsi ambush their prey, they leap on them from an elevated position, such as a rocky ledge or boulder, even taller than twenty feet. This ability is used only at the beginning of combat.*

Much like the Daursi and Androphagi, the Agathyrsi are the scattered remains of an ancient Dacian tribe. They are, however, less savage and ferocious than the warriors of the other two tribes and live in the mountains of northern Dacia, remote, inaccessible, and far from everybody. They raise the famed mountain steeds, much sought after by merchants, worship the Anemoi, the gods of wind, and their priests are the Capnobates, said to be even capable of flying.



LORDS OF THE HORDE

Average Value: DV8
1 die: Ratio
2 dice: De Bello, De Corpore, Hit Points, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Bello (on horseback), De Natura
Hit Points: 16
Weapons: Sagaris (Damage 7), Spear (Damage 6), Toxon (Damage 8).
Protections: Lorica Squamata (Protection 4)

These NPCs are often met on horseback and use the rules for mounted combat (they ride Scythian Horses, described on page 111).

The mounted warriors of the Hun Horde are the most ferocious and skilled nomad riders ever met by the legions of Rome: raiders guided by their thirst for conquest and destruction and forged by countless battles and skirmishes, so terrible in their wrath it is said that grass stops growing in their wake. For their profile, refer to the Mounted Nomads in the Core Rulebook, while the one above is that for the Lords of the Horde that lead them in battle.

The Nomads and the Lords of the Horde of Nightmares share the same profiles, but with DV8 and DV10, respectively. They ride Nightmare Horses (described further down) they have tamed and trained themselves.

BARBARIAN SORCERERS

Average Value: DV8
1 die: De Bello, De Corpore, Hit Points, Ratio
2 dice: De Natura, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Magia
Hit Points: 8
Weapons: Cudgel or Sica (Damage 4)
Protections: None

Magic Powers: Fate Roll and one (or more) of the following: Curse, Enchantment, Illusion, Metamorphosis, Paralysis, Terror, Weather Manipulation

*The **Capnobates** also have the Flight special ability.*

This NPC category groups dark wanderers, mysterious hermits, adepts of the Schola Nigra, Capnobates, Goth sorcerers, Abariti, and shamans of the sky of the Scythian plains. They are more powerful and skilled than the normal Barbarian Priests and know more powerful dark arts.

GLADIATOR NPCS

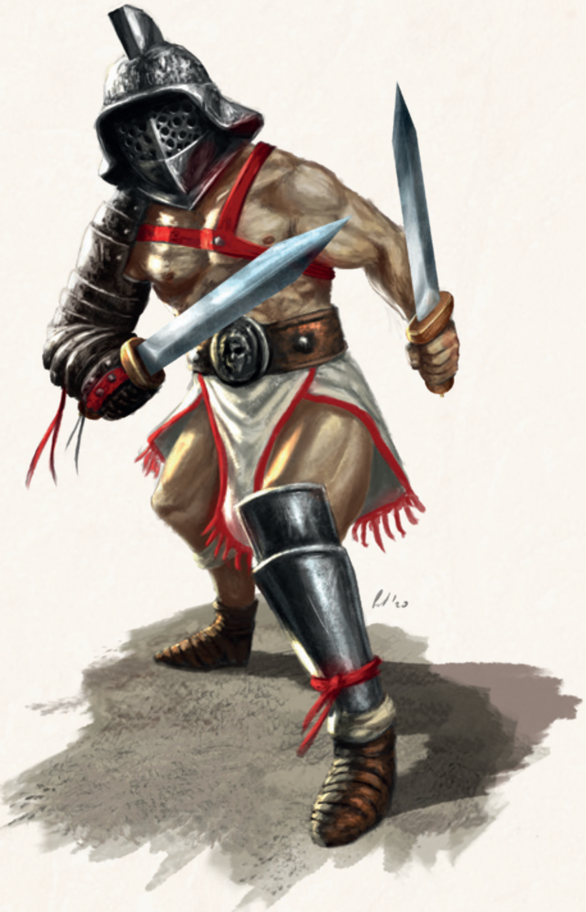
The lands of Thracia are famous for their gladiators and mounted fighters. Here was born the famous Spartacus, who almost subverted the Republic, centuries ago, and here (according to some) he returned in secret to found the Covenant that still today bears his name. Here fight all manners of warriors, in sacred, mundane, and itinerant performances.

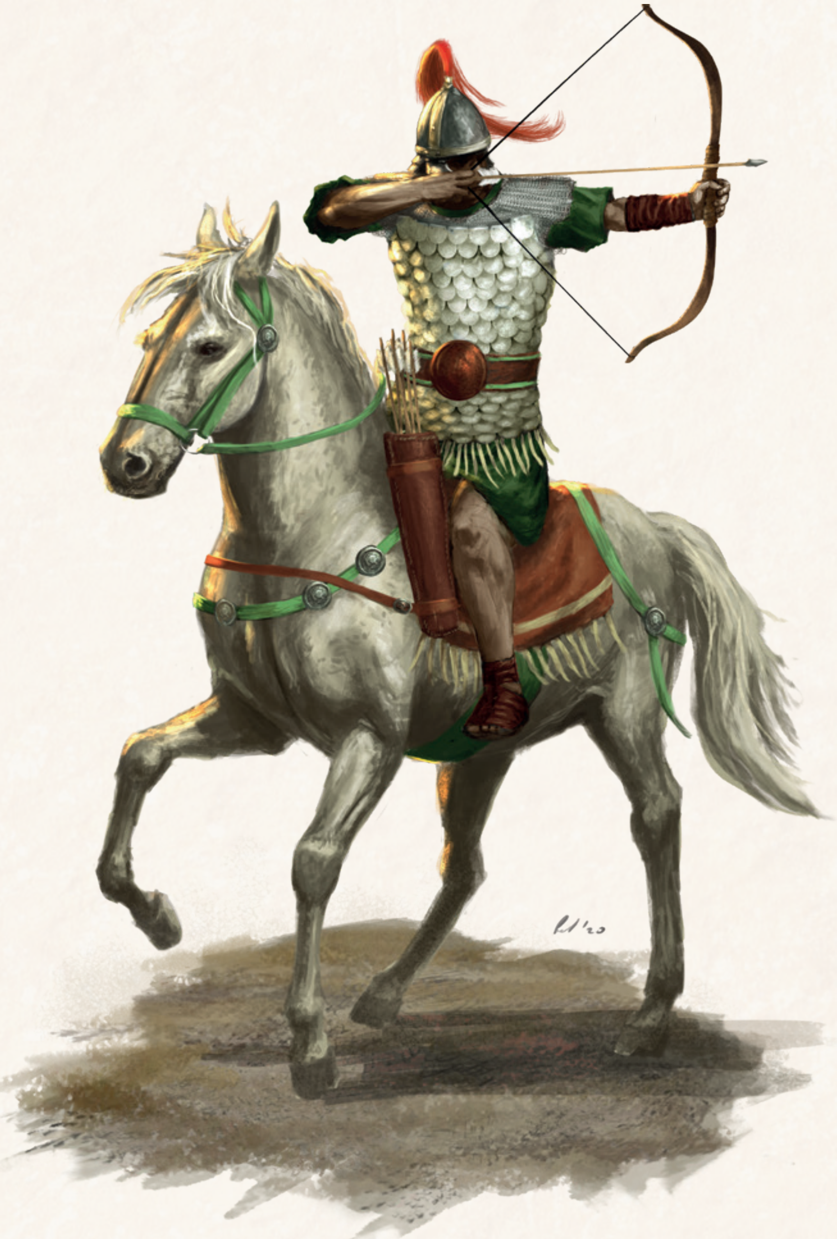
DIMACHAERUS

Average Value: DV6
1 die: Ratio, Sensibilitas
2 dice: Hit Points
3 dice: De Bello, De Corpore
Hit Points: 12
Weapons: two Gladii (Damage 6) or Sicae (Damage 4)
Protections: Helmet, Greaves, and Lorica Manica (Protection 3)

Special Abilities: Bloodthirsty

This gladiator is known for his skilled two-weapon fighting, usually two Gladii or Sicae. His special attacks are brought with an assault and a series of stabs that could leave him exposed to dangerous counterattacks.





SAGITTARIUS

Average Value: DV6
1 die: De Bello, Ratio, Sensibilitas
2 dice: De Natura (Ride), Hit Points
3 dice: De Bello (Bows), De Corpore
Hit Points: 12
Weapons: Arcus (Damage 6), Pugio (Damage 3)
Protections: Lorica Squamata (Protection 4)

Sagittarii are gladiators specializing in the use of bows, on foot or mounted.

ANIMALS

BOLINTHOS

These are the wild bison typical of northern Dacia and the steppe. Their profile is that of a Bull from the Core Rulebook, with DV12.

SCYTHIAN HORSES

Size: 4
Average Value: DV8
1 die: Damage, De Bello, Sensibilitas
2 dice: De Corpore
3 dice: De Corpore (Run), Hit Points
Hit Points: 24

Smaller than common horses, they are also much stronger and tougher. Those ridden by the nomads and the Lords of the Horde all have the War Training special ability.

FANTASTICAL CREATURES

PLANT LAMBS

Degree of Danger: 4
Size: 4
Average Value: DV12
1 die: Damage, De Bello, Sensibilitas
2 dice: De Corpore (Brawling)
3 dice: Hit Points
Hit Points: 36
Protections: Bark (Protection 6)

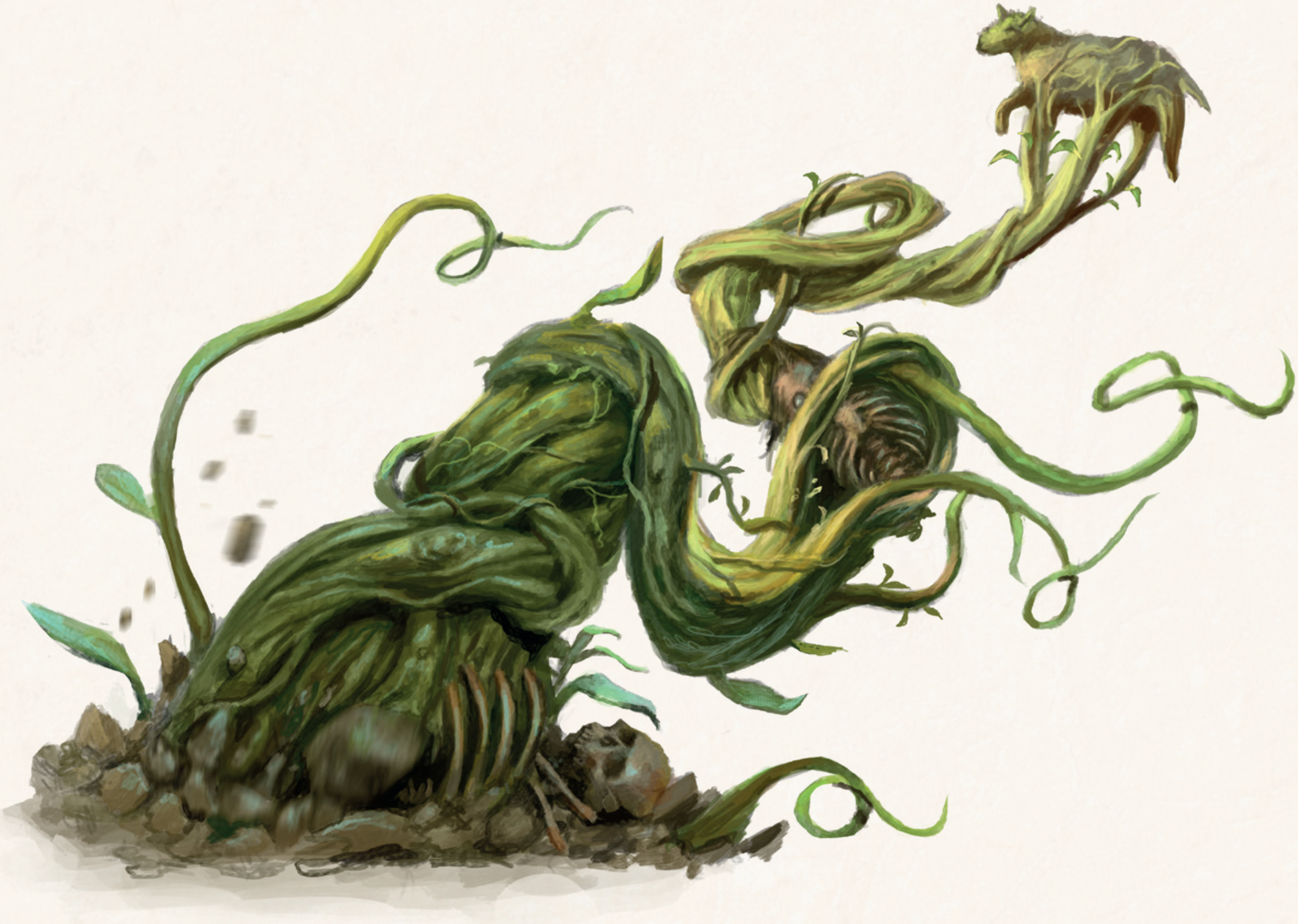
- *Special Abilities:* Grab
- *Magic Powers:* Multiple Arms (4), Illusion (1DV, the "lambs"), Multiple Heads(4)

** If the Custodes keep their distance from such a dangerous creature, they can simply attempt to fend off the attacks of its plant appendages, the "lambs" that the plant was named after:*

PLANT LAMB APPENDAGES

Degree of Danger: 1
Size: 2
Average Value: DV4
1 die: Damage
2 dice: De Bello
3 dice: De Corpore, Hit Points
Hit Points: 12
Protections: None

- *Special Abilities:* Grab, Pack Tactics



I Degree of Success
The *Agnus Scythicus*, or Plant Lamb, has been studied in the past by travelers and scholars, and according to the philosophers it is a plant, albeit one with extraordinary and unnatural properties. This tree can grow to colossal size and feeds on animals and careless travelers. Not being able to move, it lures its prey with its plant appendages (usually 4), similar to lambs, that it can even make look like they are moving and sound like they are bleating.

II Degree of Success
As soon as somebody attempts to grab the "lambs", they show their true nature, turning into a cluster of vegetable appendages that attack immediately. Once its prey is dead on the ground, the monster covers it in roots and vines to slowly feed on it.

III Degree of Success
Plant Lamb remains are used in Divination rituals. Such vegetable components must be fresh, so if they are used within three days of being taken from the creature the ritual's Degree of Success is increased by 1.

ANEMOI

Degree of Danger: 4
Size: 3
Average Value: DV10
1 die: De Bello
2 dice: Ratio, Hit Points
3 dice: De Corpore, Sensibilitas
Hit Points: 20

- *Special Abilities:* Acute Senses, Flight, Grab, Stealthy
- *Magic Powers:* Weather Manipulation, Immortality, Invulnerability (all damage), Prophecy, Fate Roll, Unnatural Speed

I Degree of Success
The Anemoi are lesser gods, spirits of the air and wind, an incarnation of breeze, gust, and storm. Their bodies are only partially material, as much as a vapor or cloud can be, and they can neither suffer nor inflict damage. However, they can lift those who threaten them high into the sky, to let them fall onto the ground.

II Degree of Success
The Anemoi are worshiped as gods by the Agathyrsi and their priests, the Capnobates, who have inherited some of their power. They hate Harpies, often living among the mountains of Thracia close to their peaks, and it seems to have been them that sired the winged horses from which descend the Agathyrsi Mountain Steeds.

III Degree of Success
The most important among the Anemoi are the eight main winds that sail the sky, especially cruel Borea, the wind of the north, fecund and friendly Zephyr, the wind of the west, and capricious Noto, the summer wind of storms.

These deities have DV12 and *Degree of Danger* 5 and usually are beyond the power of mere mortals, but often fight secret wars in the heavens, in which they might require mortal favors or support.

MONSTROUS ANIMALS

NIGHTMARE STEEDS

Degree of Danger: 2
Size: 4
Average Value: DV10
1 die: Damage, De Bello, Sensibilitas
2 dice: De Corpore
3 dice: De Corpore (Run), Hit Points
Hit Points: 30

- *Magic Powers:* Blood Sucking (1DV)

I Degree of Success
These monsters in the shape of powerful steeds have been raised in Thracia since the times of King Diomedes and then became a symbol of the Horde of Nightmares. Some wander free among the desolate lands of Moesia and Scythia, and are sometimes captured and sold to merchants and breeders at ten times the cost of a mundane horse.

II or III Degree of Success
It is said these horses are the result of the contamination of an ancient Vampire, of a Blood God or a Nosphoratus, perhaps Apletos of Byzantium, in similar manner to the Gelloi. This theory would explain their thirst for blood and their taste for flesh, preferably human. For this reason, anything that is useful against Vampires and Gelloi is also effective against Nightmare Steeds.

PLUTONIAN FISH

Degree of Danger: 2
Average Value: DV5*
1 die: Damage, Sensibilitas
2 dice: De Bello
3 dice: De Corpore (in water), Hit Points
Hit Points: 15
Protections: None

- *Special Abilities:* Acute Senses, Poison (2DV), Stealthy
- *Magic Powers:* Multiple Arms (5), Multiple Heads (5), Unnatural Speed

** For every 3 points of damage the creature suffers, its DV is reduced by 1, to a minimum of DV3.*
Note. *This profile does not refer to an individual specimen, by itself not a threat, but to medium or larger schools of Plutonian Fish. The magic powers Multiple Arms and Multiple Heads represent their moving and hunting in unison. Depending on the size of the school, the DV can change at the discretion of the Demiurge (adjust the degree of danger accordingly).*

I Degree of Success
Where the bottom of the seas and lakes mingles with Hades and its fumes are born monstrous creatures normally ascribed to Pluto. Prodigious animals that often have brief lives or never leave their abyss, sometimes they are sighted on the surface and attack sailors and *urinatores* (diving experts). It is said the Pontus Euxinus, especially around the sunken cities that dot its depths, is infested by these monsters.

II or III Degree of Success
Their bite is toxic. The only known way to defeat them is to draw them to the surface and to the light, where they become weakened and sometimes even die when exposed to the rays of Apollo or Diana, or to distract them with bleeding carcasses. In the latter case, they focus on the meat and ignore anything swimming around them.

SACRED ANIMALS

PROMETHEAN EAGLES

Degree of Danger: 2
Size: 3
Average Value: DV6
1 die: Damage, Hit Points
2 dice: De Corpore
3 dice: De Bello, Sensibilitas
Hit Points: 6

- *Special Abilities:* Acute Senses, Dive, Flight, Grab
- *Magic Powers:* Fate Roll, Regeneration (1DV), Unnatural Speed

I Degree of Success
These supernatural birds are gifted with a faint divine spark, as they are the descendants of one of the Eagles of Jupiter, sent to Caucasus to devour the liver of Prometheus thousands of years ago. Proving one's consecration to Jupiter and the Olympians is one way to keep these creatures at bay.

II Degree of Success
The Eagles of Jupiter have fed for years on the liver of Prometheus, and the regeneration the Titan was famous for was inherited by their descendants.

III Degree of Success
Promethean Eagles seem to stalk the ruins of the city of the Titans and their ancient dwellings. It seems they guard those places where there are still items or shards of adamans, and are the scourge of relic hunters.

MOUNTAIN STEEDS

Degree of Danger: 1
Size: 4
Average Value: DV10
1 die: Damage, De Bello, Sensibilitas
2 dice: De Corpore, Hit Points
3 dice: De Corpore (Run)
Hit Points: 20

- *Magic Powers:* Fate Roll, Unnatural Speed

I Degree of Success
Agathyrsi Mountain Steeds descend from winged horses and, indirectly, from the very Anemoi. For the Agathyrsi, they are sacred creatures that they raise with honor and respect. Stealing or capturing a Mountain Steed is considered dire blasphemy.

II or III Degree of Success
Taming and training such a steed is extremely difficult, requiring a **De Natura** roll (DT 24). The legendary *Silver Bridle of the Agathyrsi* decreases the DT to 12.

ARIMASPI

Degree of Danger: 2
Size: 3
Average Value: DV6
1 die: Ratio, Sensibilitas
2 dice: De Bello, De Corpore
3 dice: De Bello (on horseback), De Natura, Hit Points
Hit Points: 18
Weapons: Arimaspi Spear (Damage 8), Toxon (Damage 8)
Protections: Animal skins (Protection 3)

- *Magic Powers:* Fate Roll

Theses NPCs are often met riding Scythian Horses and use the rules for mounted combat.

I Degree of Success
Slightly larger than average, savage and bestial like the Troglodytes, with only one eye on their forehead like the Cyclopes, these few and dispersed nomads of the steppe of Scythia are what is left of an ancient primordial kin from the time of the ancient giants.

II Degree of Success
Although considered prehistoric monsters, the Arimaspi are often peaceful, aware they are a species in their twilight and soon destined to extinction. Many of them are willing to help and advise travelers in difficulty, should they prove friendly.

III Degree of Success
Their last attempt at forming a kingdom or becoming part of a civilization was in the age of the Cimmerians, under the guidance of the giants Gog and Magog.

When the last bastion of Tauris was defeated, the surviving Arimaspi scattered. Many of them know the secrets of the lost tombs and cities of the Cimmerians, and where Gog and Magog could still be trapped to this day.

DAIGERNA

Human form
Degree of Danger: 3
Size: 3
Average Value: DV10
1 die: Ratio
2 dice: De Bello, De Corpore, Sensibilitas
3 dice: Hit Points
Hit Points: 30
Weapons: Two-handed Falx (Damage 12)
Protections: Animal skins (Protection 3)

- *Special Abilities:* Bloodthirsty
- *Magic Powers:* Metamorphosis

Man-wolf form
Degree of Danger: 4
Size: 3
Average Value: DV10
1 die: Damage
2 dice: De Bello, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Corpore, Hit Points
Hit Points: 30
Protections: None

- *Special Abilities:* Acute Senses, Bloodthirsty
- *Magic Powers:* Invulnerability (to all hits that inflict 10 points of damage or less), Metamorphosis

*The fearsome **Chieftains** are the lords of the last surviving Daigerna families. They have DV12, additional special abilities such as Charge, Grab, or Stealthy and magic powers such as Regeneration or Terror.*

I Degree of Success
The Daigerna ("wolf skins") of Dacia are similar to the Italic Versipellis, although similar to the Germanic and Gothic Berserkirs, too. They do not spread their monstrous nature by disease or take their bestial form through the valor of the Berserkir, but their powers are bound to the ancient bloodlines of the Daursi.

II Degree of Success
The bestial form of the Daigerna is that of a being halfway between wolf and man, larger and stronger than Versipellis, but turning without entirely shifting their skin. The profile described above is referred to them. The transformation and the power of the bestial form of the Daigerna depend on the "purity" of their blood, and it is not yet understood if the Daursi are an ancient Dacian tribe contaminated by the dark curse of the Daigerna, or the Daigerna are the product of lost rituals of the Daursi. Either way, Daigerna and Daursi are strictly connected.

III Degree of Success
A Daigerna in human form is nothing more than a stronger and larger Daursi. One Daursi in a hundred is Daigerna in human form, and the nefarious aura around them can be felt with a **Sensibilitas** roll. It seems they are particularly vulnerable to silver and adamans, which ignore their Invulnerability.

DEMONS

ORDOGUS

Degree of Danger: 5
Size: 3
Value: DV12
1 die: Damage
2 dice: De Corpore, Hit Points, Ratio, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Bello
Hit Points: 24
Protections: None

- *Special Abilities:* Acute Senses, Grab, Stealthy
- *Magic Powers:* Blood Sucking (1DV), Disease* (2DV, the victim is *wounded* by Ordogus), Immortality, Order** (2DV), Possession (2DV, only against *Unconscious* victims), Regeneration (1DV), Shadows** (2DV), Terror (2DV, the creature *must see* its victim), Unnatural Speed, Vampire Contagion**

** Victims of the Disease of Ordogus are also* Poisoned *for the entire duration of the Disease. This Disease cannot be healed with conventional means and requires an exorcism.*

*** See Vampires in the Core Rulebook for these magic powers.*

I Degree of Success
This dark being, seething with shadows, thirsty for blood and terrifying power, has been worshiped and feared for centuries as a god of death and the underworld by the nomads from Scythia and Asia. When he appears in his most frequent mortal guise, he looks like a ruthless, dark-skinned warlord, his hair tied in the Hun fashion and his eyes burning coals.

II Degree of Success
Ordogus is a Nosphoratus, one of the Blood Gods (see page 116), who has walked among the nomads and raiders for a long time before the worship of the people of the steppe allowed him to ascend to Demonic godhood. His lair is a dark and grim cave scattered with the remains of his meals, somewhere in the heart of Scythia. His most famous powers are skill in battle and instilling fear and terror in his victims.

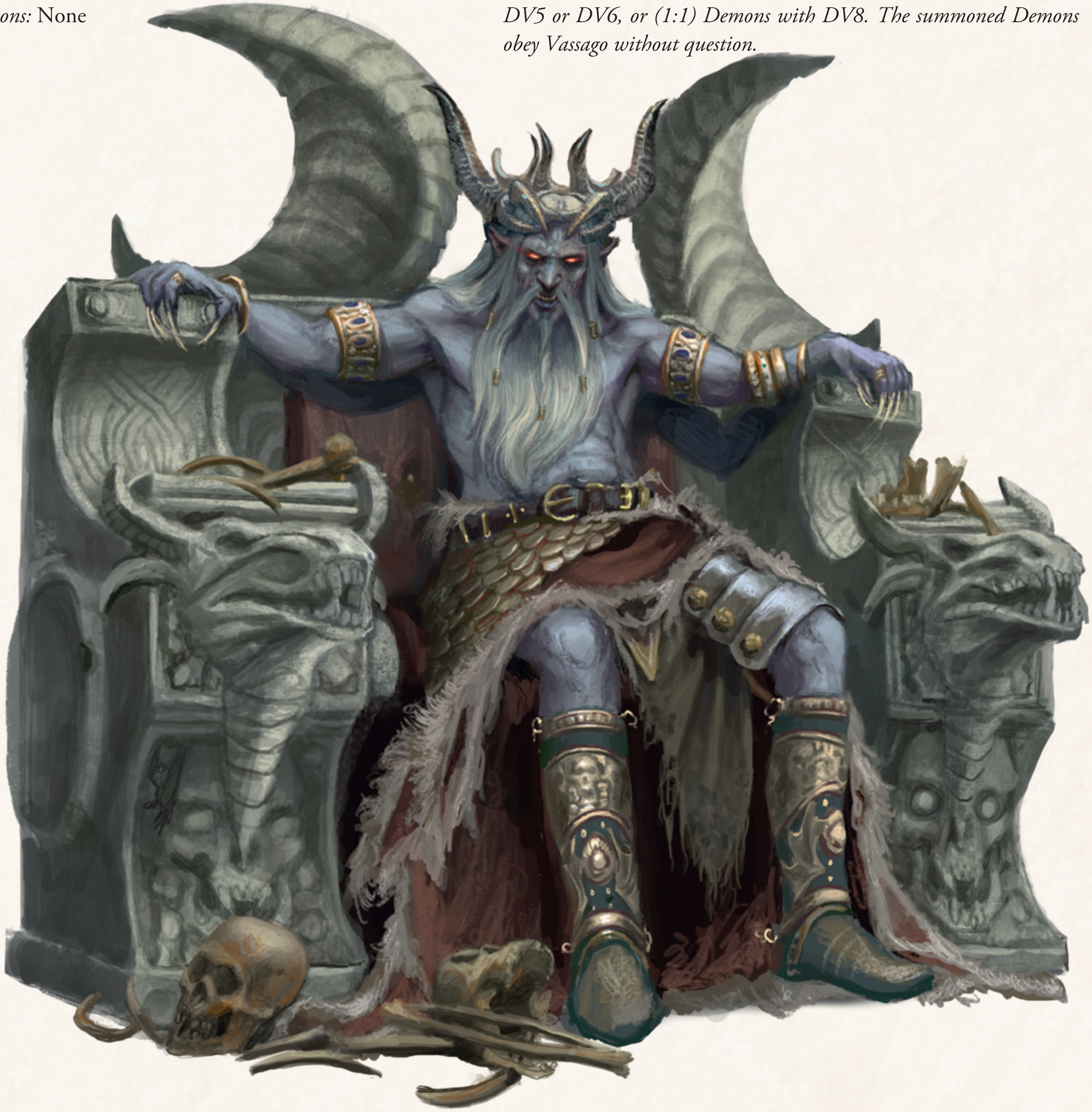
III Degree of Success
Not only has Ordogus the Black turned Attila into a vampire and is waiting to do the same with his son Csaba, but it seems that he as more "sons and daughters" scattered among the lands of the eastern nomad hordes. Their exact number is uncertain, but some speak of nine male descendants and nine female, an absolutely frightening number.

VASSAGO

Degree of Danger: 4
Size: 3
Value: DV10
1 die: Damage, De Corpore
2 dice: De Bello, Hit Points, Ratio
3 dice: De Magia, De Societate (Command), Sensibilitas
Hit Points: 20
Protections: None

- *Special Abilities:* Acute Senses
- *Magic Powers:* Curse (2DV, the victim must *hear* Vassago), Immortality, Invite* (2DV, Demons), Possession (2DV, only against *Unconscious* victims), Prophecy, Soul Sucking (1DV)

** See Vampires in the Core Rulebook for this magic power. Vassago can use this power to summon Demons where he is or is heading. The number of Demons he calls depends on the Degree of Success obtained in the roll (DT 6 if Vassago is outside of Imperial borders, DT 9 inside, DT 12 if in an area consecrated to the Roman gods). The higher the Degree of Success, the more Demons he summons and the greater their power: I Degree of Success: (1:1) Demons with DV4 or less, or a single Demon with DV5 or DV6; II Degree of Success: (2:1) Demons with DV4, (1:1) Demons with DV5 or DV6, or a single Demon with DV8; III Degree of Success: (3:1) Demons with DV4, (2:1) Demons with DV5 or DV6, or (1:1) Demons with DV8. The summoned Demons obey Vassago without question.*



I Degree of Success
Vassago is a Demon, ruler of an intricate and unknown pseudo-monarchy of dark lords known only to their worshipers. He looks like an old and powerful man, gifted with clairvoyance and sat on a throne above his infernal cohorts, a crown of horns around his head.

II Degree of Success
Vassago is famous for having taught demonology and summoning to Goth sorcerers.

III Degree of Success
According to the Dominicanae who have studied the power of this Demon, Theurgy is not enough to defeat him. Within the occult mysteries that he taught his sorcerers is hidden the one secret capable of destroying him, and, since the power of Goth sorcery comes from Vassago, eradicating its source would mean critically weakening his underlings.

DRAGONS

BALAURI

Degree of Danger: 4
Size: 4
Average Value: DV12
1 die: Damage, Sensibilitas
2 dice: De Bello, De Corpore
3 dice: Hit Points
Hit Points: 36
Protections: Scales (Protection 6)

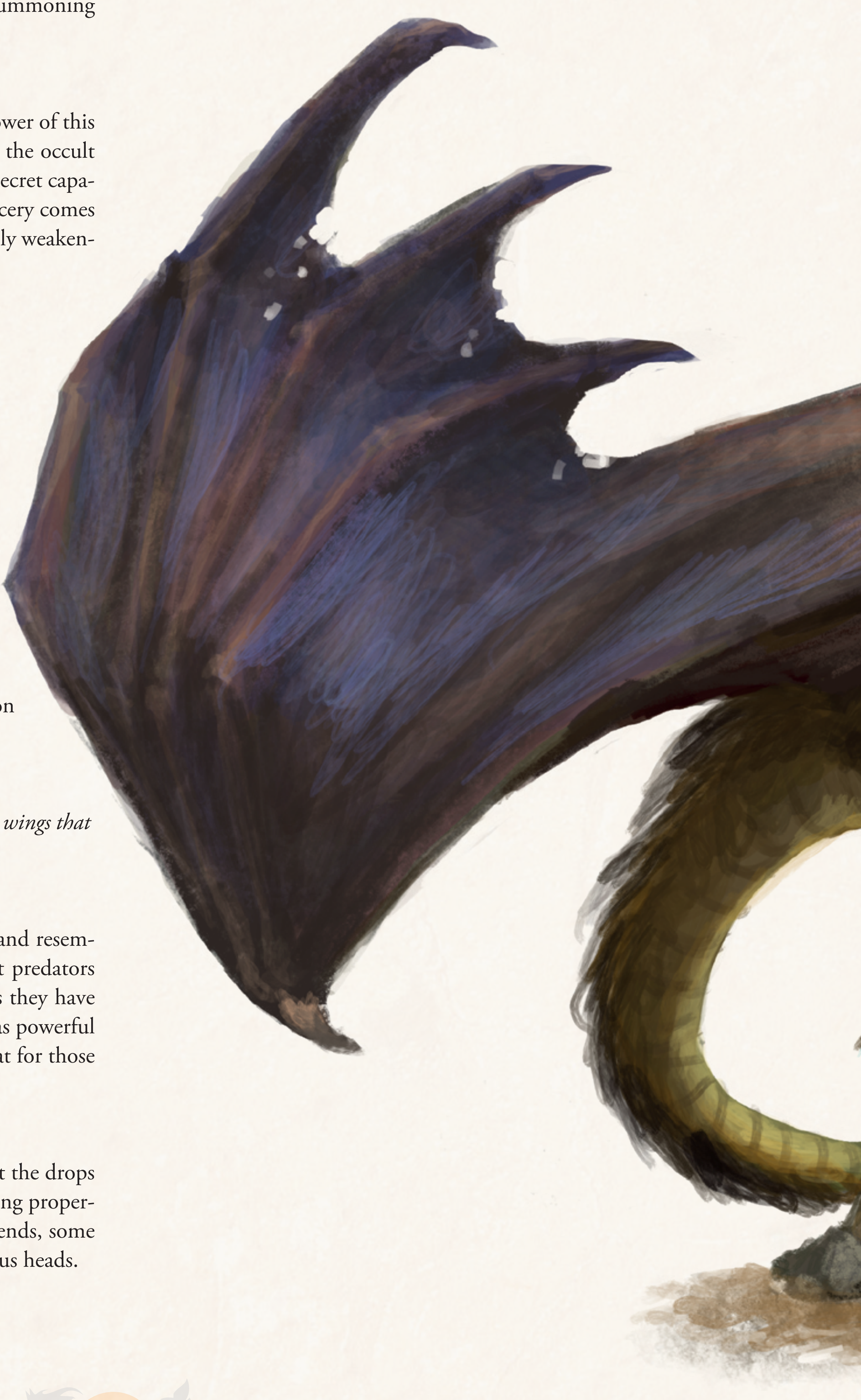
- *Special Abilities:* Acute Senses, Grab, Poison (1DV)
- *Magic Powers:* Weather Manipulation

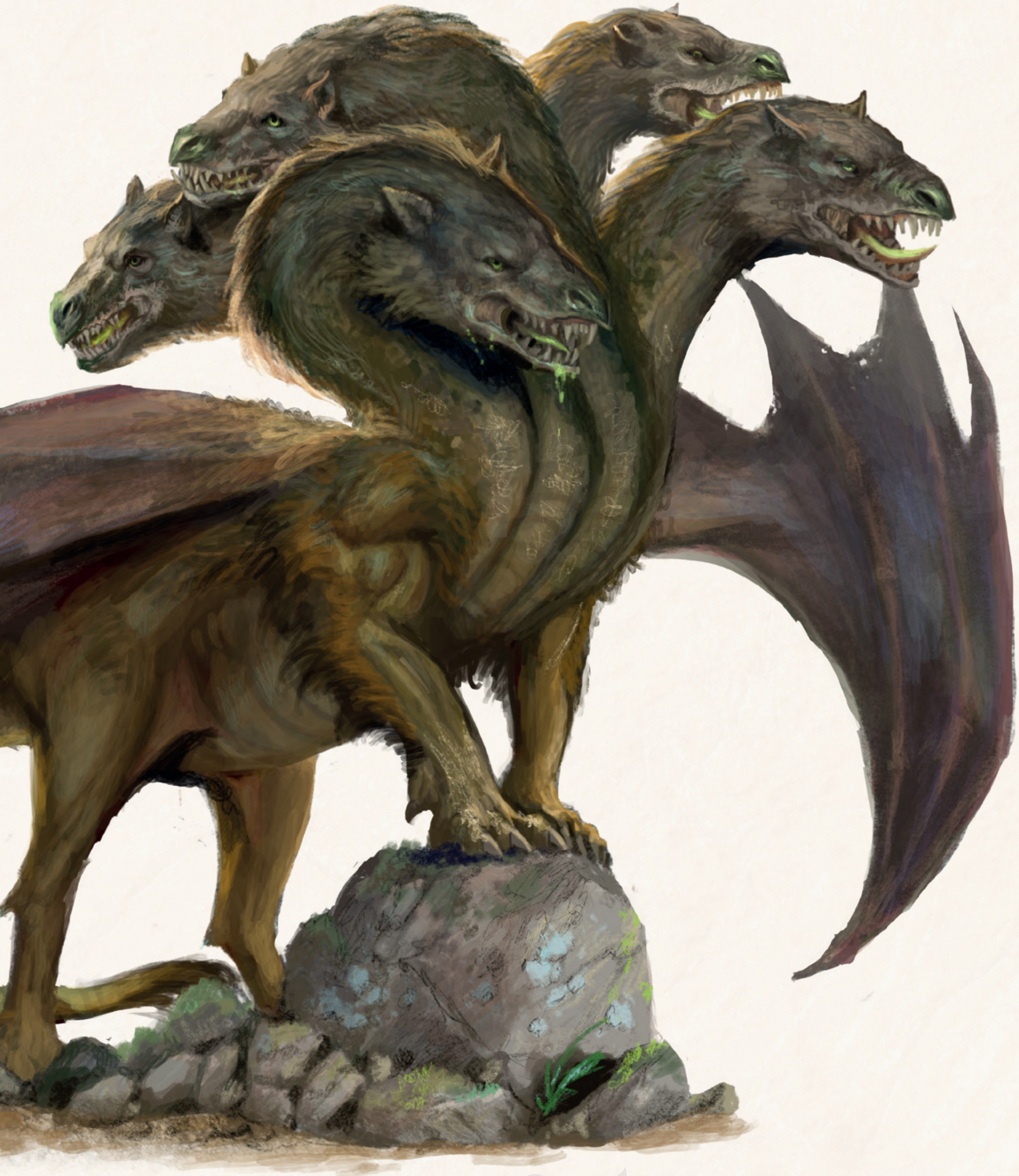
***Legendary Balauri** have Multiple Heads (3, 5, or 7) and wings that grant them the Flight special ability.*

I Degree of Success
The Balauri of Dacia are akin to Dragons and Hydras and resemble enormous wolf-headed reptiles. They are the oldest predators and terrors of the Dacian people, and the very symbols they have chosen for their war and clan banners. The Balauri are as powerful as Dragons and as cunning as wolves, a primordial threat for those who lose their way in the deep forests of the north.

II Degree of Success
It is known that the bite of the Balauri is poisonous, but the drops of its toxic saliva can generate precious stones with healing properties when they fall on the ground. According to the legends, some extremely ancient and powerful Balauri possess numerous heads.

III Degree of Success
The Balauri are capable of summoning storms and seem to favor mortals with the same power. Barbarian sorcerers with this ability (for example Abariti, Scholomancers, and Capnobates) have managed in the past not only to calm these creatures, but to ally with and ride them, too.





DAUGHTERS OF ECHIDNA

Degree of Danger: 3
Size: 3
Average Value: DV8
1 die: Damage, Ratio
2 dice: De Bello, Hit Points, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Corpore
Hit Points: 16
Protections: Scales (Protection 3)

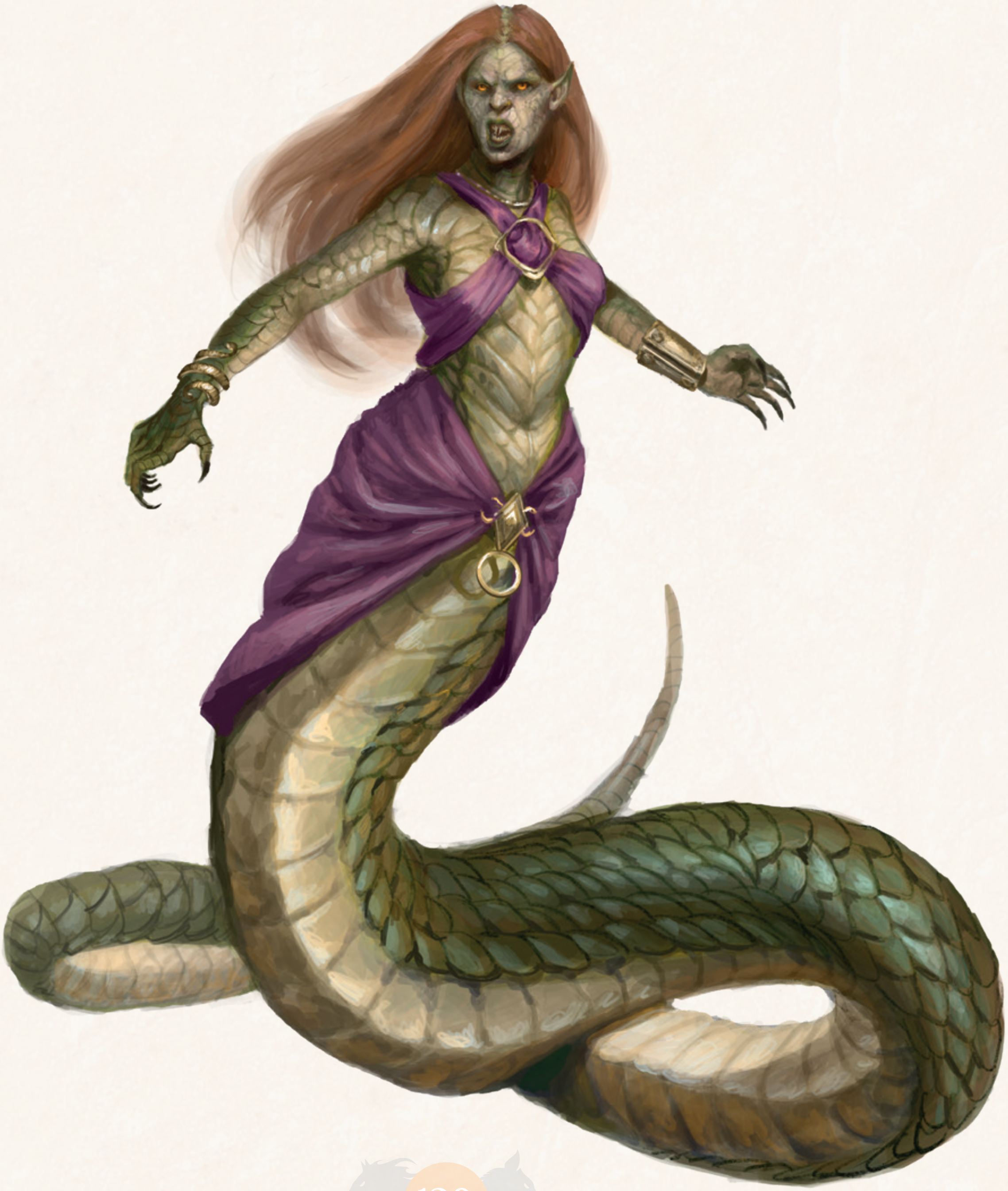
- *Special Abilities:* Grab, Poison (2DV, only against already Grabbed creatures), Stealthy

I Degree of Success

These monsters look like enormous snakes from the abdomen downwards, the rest of their bodies those of monstrous women. Deadly predators from Scythia, these beings do not have famous supernatural capabilities other than the subtlety and cunning of reptiles and the ferocious malevolence of ruinous deities.

II or III Degree of Success

The myth says that they are actually divine creatures proper, descendants of Hercules and Echidna, and there is no reason to disbelieve it. Because of this, the sacred invocations to Hercules (for example the Indigitamentum *Hercules Invictus* and *Hercules' Blessing* from the Sortes) have the extraordinary effect of plunging them into fear and making them run away.



UNDEAD

RIDERS OF THE DEAD

Degree of Danger: 3
Average Value: DV8
1 die: Damage*, Ratio
2 dice: De Bello, Hit Points
3 dice: De Corpore, Sensibilitas
Hit Points: 16
Weapons: Spectral Weapons*
Protections: None

- *Special Abilities:* Stealthy
- *Magic Powers:* Curse (2DV, the victim must *hear* the creature), Invulnerability (except against fire and weapons consecrated against the *Undead*), Terror (2DV, the victim must *see* or *be touched* by the creature), Unnatural Speed

**The weapons of the Riders of the Dead are made of a spectral substance and bite through shields and armor; a stab from one of these weapons ignores non-adamans shields and armor.*

I Degree of Success
These spectral riders are the remains of nobles and lords from a bygone age, pale echoes of what they once were. Dead or buried with their masters, the war steeds of these aristocrats or leaders are now part of their manifestations and grant them supernatural speed and the capacity to cover great distances from their place of burial, to which they must return before each dawn.

II Degree of Success
The dead riders of Dacia are the princes the Romans defeated and killed in the past wars, still harboring eternal resentment against the emissaries of the Empire. Some, however, have had the chance to meditate on the meaninglessness of all things - including their own hatred - and could listen to the words of those who approach them and prove to not fear them.

III Degree of Success
It is said that in some moonless nights all the riders of the dead gallop in the night to the ruins of Sarmizegethusa and gather around the Grim Sire, reporting what they have seen and discovered during the previous month, receiving new orders. On a day not far from now, the Dacians believe, they will be called forth for the last time, and shall ride against the cities of the living, bringing death and destruction at the head of the Exercitus Mortuorum.

CIMMERIAN SHADOWS

Degree of Danger: 4
Average Value: DV10
1 die: Hit Points
2 dice: De Bello, De Corpore
3 dice: Sensibilitas
Hit Points: 10
Weapons: Spectral Weapons*
Protections: None

- *Special Abilities:* Stealthy
- *Magic Powers:* Invulnerability (except against fire and weapons consecrated against the *Undead*), Paralysis* (2DV, the creature must *touch* the victim; **Vigor** roll to oppose), Prophecy, Shadows**, Unnatural Speed

** This power represents the only weapon of the Cimmerian Shadows (they do not have a Damage score). In addition to curdling the blood in the veins of their victims, their cold spectral touch is capable of draining their life force; if they fail the* ***Vigor*** *roll, in addition to the base effects, they lose a number of Hit Points equal to the difference between their roll and that of the strength of the Paralysis (armor does not protect them).*
*** See Vampires in the Core Rulebook for this magic power.*

I Degree of Success
The specters that inhabit the tombs of Scythia and the forgotten lands of Thracia are known as “Cimmerian Shadows”, probably in memory of the warrior princes of that ancient people who are buried there. They know no mercy for the intruders in their tombs, considering them a gift of Axiokersos and Axiokersa, a tribute of blood they can feed upon.

THE HOSTS OF THE DEAD OF DECEDITUS

The Exercitus Mortuorum of Dacia presents every kind of Larva and Lemure among its ranks, from the Riders of the Dead who appear sometimes in the mist to the funereal and evanescent princes of the dead who sit at the side of the Grim Sire.
To portray such a wide range of creatures, use every DV available to the Riders of the Dead, Larvae, and Lemuri and adjust the Degree of Danger and Hit Points accordingly. The most powerful specters have a choice of the following additional magic powers: Curse, Enchantment, Illusion, Permanent Wounds, Possession, Prophecy, and Weather Manipulation.

II Degree of Success
The Cimmerian Shadows never leave their tombs, protecting their earthly remains and treasures. Rituals, sacrifices, and proper prayers addressed to the spirits of the Cimmerian dead can sate and placate them, so they can grant useful prophecies to those who have honored their tombs.

III Degree of Success
Although they fear fire, they can summon impenetrable palls of darkness on intruders before killing them when light has been snuffed out. It is also true that finding the mortal remains of these ancient rulers and setting them on fire on a pyre completely dissipates their spirits.

VAMPIRES - NOSPHORATI

The Nosphorati are the most powerful known Vampires, even mightier than the ancient ones and subject only to the Shadow Mother, Lilith, the occult mistress of all of their depraved kin. Also known as Blood Gods, they are all different from one another, and their spawn share their traits. Chamalcan, who appeared in the adventure *From Vesper til Aurora* in *Mysteries of the Empire, Volume I*, was a Nosphoratus, and the Vespertili his particular spawn.

The following profile is for the majority of generic Nosphorati. It is followed by any modifications for those Nosphorati specific to Dacia and Thracia.

Nosphorati

Degree of Danger: 5
Size: 3 or 4
Average Value: DV12
1 die: Damage
2 dice: De Bello, De Corpore, Hit Points, Ratio, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Bello (special), De Corpore (special)
Hit Points: 24
Protections: None

- *Special Abilities:* Acute Senses, Grab, Stealthy
- *Magic Powers:* Blood Sucking (1DV), Disease* (2DV, the victim is *wounded* by the creature), Immortality, Invite** (2DV, special), Order** (2DV), Possession (2DV, only against *Unconscious* victims), Regeneration (1DV), Shadows** (2DV), Unnatural Speed, Vampire Contagion**

** Victims of the Disease of the Nosphorati are also* Poisoned *for its entire duration. This Disease cannot be healed with conventional means, and it is necessary to kill the Nosphoratus that inflicted it before the victim dies, turning into a Gello or Vampire, depending on the mode of contamination.*
*** See Vampires in the Core Rulebook for these magic powers.*

ABYZOU, THE STRIX

- *Additional Special Abilities*: Dive, Flight
- *Additional Magic Powers:* Metamorphosis (into a woman)

The improved De Bello and De Corpore scores apply when she has enough room to fly. The magic power Invite calls owls or 1 Strix per Degree of Success (see Core Rulebook).

MORMOLYCE, THE QUEEN UNDER THE FOREST

- *Additional Special Abilities:* Pack Tactics
- *Additional Magic Powers:* Metamorphosis (into a Wolf)

Mormolyce does not have improved De Bello and De Corpore scores. The magic power Invite calls a pack of Wolves or 1 Vrykolakas (see below) per Degree of Success.

APLETOS, THE BASILEUS

- *Additional Special Abilities:* Formation (when Apletos fights adjacent to two or more allies)
- *Additional Magic Powers:* Enchantment (2DV, Apletos must *stare* at his victim)

The improved De Bello and De Corpore scores apply under the same conditions as Formation. The magic power Invite calls a group of soldiers or servants or 1 Vampire per Degree of Success.

CHOMODRACAENA, THE DRAGONESS

Size: 4

- *Additional Special Abilities:* Net (a spurt of bloodied filaments to trap her victim)
- *Additional Magic Powers:* Paralysis (2DV, Chomodracaena *stares* at her victim)

The improved De Bello and De Corpore scores apply only in the tight confines of her lair, in which the monster can slither with ease on her secretions. The magic power Invite calls rats or other parasites or 1 Hirudo (see next page) per Degree of Success.

THE VAMPIRES OF DACIA AND THRACIA

The profile for Vampires in the Core Rulebook perfectly portrays the spawn of Apletos: Vampires who hide among men like wolves among sheep, human to the undiscerning eye. Almost all the spawn of Lilith hiding in Byzantium share this nature.

The Strixes described in the Core Rulebook are the perfect reference for the spawn of Abyzou. In addition to what is in the Core Rulebook, the descendants of the blood of Abyzou have the magic power Metamorphosis, with which they can appear (or return to the form of) alluring and charming women, which is how they have founded the sect of the Sons of Caligula that now infests the Empire. In addition to these types, there are others, each descending from the remaining Nosphorati:

VRYKOLAKAS, THE FERAL VAMPIRES OF DACIA

Degree of Danger: 3
Size: 3
Average Value: DV8 (DV10 or also DV12, in the case of Ancient Vrykolakas)
1 die: Damage, Ratio
2 dice: De Bello, Hit Points, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Corpore, Hit Points
Hit Points: 24

- *Special Abilities:* Acute Senses, Grab, Stealthy
- *Magic Powers:* Blood Sucking (1DV), Immortality, Unnatural Speed, Vampire Contagion, Vampiric Strength
- *Additional Magic Powers of the Ancient Vrykolakas:* Invite (2DV; Wolves), Order (2DV), Regeneration (1DV), Shadows (2DV)

This kind of Vampire is the direct spawn of Mormolyce and is a being halfway between Vampire and Wolf. They have nothing to do with either the Versipellis or the Daigerna. Vampires with a brutal and ferocious form, they tend to be the perfect predators in the endless and dark forests of Dacia.

HIRUDO, THE LEECHES

Degree of Danger: 3
Size: 3
Average Value: DV8 (DV10 or also DV12, in the case of Ancient Hirudo)
1 die: Damage
2 dice: De Bello, De Corpore, Ratio, Sensibilitas
3 dice: Hit Points
Hit Points: 24

- *Special Abilities:* Grab, Net, Stealthy
- *Magic Powers:* Blood Sucking (1DV), Immortality, Paralysis (2DV, the creature must *stare* at the victim), Vampire Contagion, Vampiric Strength
- *Additional Magic Powers of the Ancient Hirudo:* Invite (2DV; rats and parasites), Order (2DV), Regeneration (1DV) , Shadows (2DV)

This kind of Vampire is the most abject and deformed, direct descendants of Chomodracaena, altered to her image. Leeches are swollen and hairless, their limbs atrophied, their once mortal shape now a squishy and nauseating sack which sole purpose is to suck blood.

GELLOI

The lowest echelons of the hierarchy of the Vampires and the other spawn of Lilith, right above their victims, cultists, and servants, are the Gelloi (sing. Gello), mortals who have tasted the corrupted blood of the Vampires but were not killed by it. Vampire Contagion has induced in them inhuman frenzy, hunger for human flesh and blood, and the urge to obey and serve their Vampire masters in exchange for some drop of blood. Gelloi are still living, and can regularly move under the sun, performing many tasks for their masters. However, a **Sensibilitas** roll (DT 6) in their vicinity reveals their corruption. It is not clear if it is possible to revert a Gello to its human condition, but if there is a way surely it includes killing the Vampire that created and dominates it first, otherwise its call will be always prevalent.

The condition of Gello can be applied to any human or animal, granting them the following benefits. Gelloi also have a Degree of Danger score proportionate to their DV.

Degree of Danger: based on the DV of the base (DV6 or less: 1; DV8: 2; DV10: 3; DV12: 4; DV20: 5)
Size: That of the base
Average Value: That of the base
1 die: Those of the base
2 dice: Those of the base (Gelloi always have a De Bello score of at least 2 dice)
3 dice: Those of the base
Hit Points: Those of the base

- *Special Abilities:* Those of the base, plus Grab and Stealthy
- *Magic Powers:* Those of the base, plus Blood Sucking (1DV, only against already Grabbed creatures) and Vampiric Strength

Alternatively, the Demiurge can use the following profile of the typical human Gello:

Gelloi
Degree of Danger: 1
Size: 3
Average Value: DV5
1 die: Ratio
2 dice: De Bello, Hit Points, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Corpore
Hit Points: 10

- *Special Abilities:* Grab, Stealthy
- *Magic Powers:* Blood Sucking (1DV, only against already Grabbed creatures), Vampiric Strength

PART VII

ADVENTURES

THE EMPIRE OF BLOOD

PLAYER INTRODUCTION

The nights of Dacia and Thracia are plagued by dire events, massacres, and mysterious murders. Restlessness crawls everywhere, a strange evil that physicians call "consumption" afflicts many inhabitants, and often old nannies and village elders refer to the terrible legends about the direst of the terrors of the night: vampires!

The existence of creatures that feed on blood and seduce the careless is well known to the Cohors Arcana. Strixes, Lamias, Empusai, Incubi and Succubi, Demons from the East, and Greek Vrykolakas have all been sighted and destroyed multiple times in the past.

Recently, however, these phenomena seem to have spread further and wider, like a disease. Significant cases have happened in Gades, Rome, Asia, and Achaia, proving these vampires and their servants can be found anywhere in the Empire.

It is among the gloomy forests of Dacia and the ancient ruins of Thracia that these enemies grow stronger. The very term "vampire" seems to have originated around these parts, like "Vrykolakas", and the vampires spotted in these regions have unique characteristics the Cohors Arcana is still studying in the field.

The Custodes are called to the region to investigate the recent events and contribute to the effort of eradicating that evil from the earth.

DEMIURGE INTRODUCTION

In this adventure, the Custodes challenge one of the main dangers of the region, the hordes of Vampires that plague Dacia and Thracia. Given the overall theme of this expansion module, the scenario is made up of different modular hooks that the Demiurge can weave into their game at will. The ending, too, is open, to allow the Vampire hunt to continue ad infinitum, leaving the group free to decide when it is enough to stop and enjoy their successes and when, instead, to continue in any of the many possible directions, up to challenging the Blood Gods or even the Shadow Mother herself.

First, why the Custodes are in the region:

- If the Custodes or the group have already met the Vespertili and Chamalcan in the adventure *From Vesper til Aurora* (*Mysteries of the Empire, Volume I*), they might want to know more about and be assigned to fight specifically these beings. Who better than the survivors of Gades can help?
- Much in the same way, if the Custodes have met the Sons of Caligula in that same adventure (*Mysteries of the Empire, Volume I*) and wish to continue the fight against that sect, leaving the Scepter of Atlas momentarily aside, the command of the Cohors Arcana of Thracia assigns them to **Esselius** (see further down below), who seems to know more about the matter.
- If this is instead the first adventure of the Custodes or their first concerning Vampires, the triggering episode is the return of the Torturer to Ulpia Traiana (see below). The aristocrats of Dacia are terrorized by what happened the previous winter (see page 10), and now that the monstrous murderer is close enough to strike again, the citizenry is terrified. This could be the reason why the Custodes are in the region.

In addition to what was said before, what is happening in Ulpia Traiana?

The vampire known as "the Torturer" was a living servant of Axivarna, **Polidorus**. Axivarna has used loyal Polidorus to rent the palace and hide many of his traffics in Dacia. After his lord left, Polidorus covered his tracks and realized that one of the lifeless victims in Axivarna's dungeons, **Elenora**, had in the meantime turned into a Vampire without anybody noticing, perhaps unknown even to Axivarna himself. To prevent this new spawn and the Gelloi of Ulpia Traiana from causing any trouble, Polidorus was able to detain her and, in a villa outside town, to keep both her and the community safe from each other, waiting for the return of their mutual master. In time, however, Polidorus fell in love with Elenora, as she grew more beautiful and weaker as the days passed. He fed her to keep her alive, constantly finding new victims, and even offering her his neck more and more often. One day, incapable of resisting her, Polidorus fell to the renewed strength of Elenora and was bled dry, becoming a spawn of the Vampiress he should have kept isolated and safe. Then, treacherous Elenora took over the community of the Gelloi and the servants of Axivarna in the city and began ordering more and more victims brought to her to placate her thirst. Without the guidance of expert Axivarna, now Elenora and Polidorus have greatly exposed themselves and have again attracted the attention of the citizenry, who believe the Torturer is back.

Adventure Average Value: 6 EP

SYNOPSIS

This adventure is divided into three parts, plus a few suggestions on how to proceed if a fourth part is needed.

PART 1: TRANSYLVANIA

Headed to Ulpia Traiana, the Custodes are caught by the cruel Vampiress Camilla and her pack of Gelloi.

PART 2: VAMPIRE HUNTERS

The war against the spawn of Axivarna continues, and the Custodes must learn what is happening in the city, and to then find and defeat Elenora.

PART 3: THE WRATH OF THE BLOOD GODS

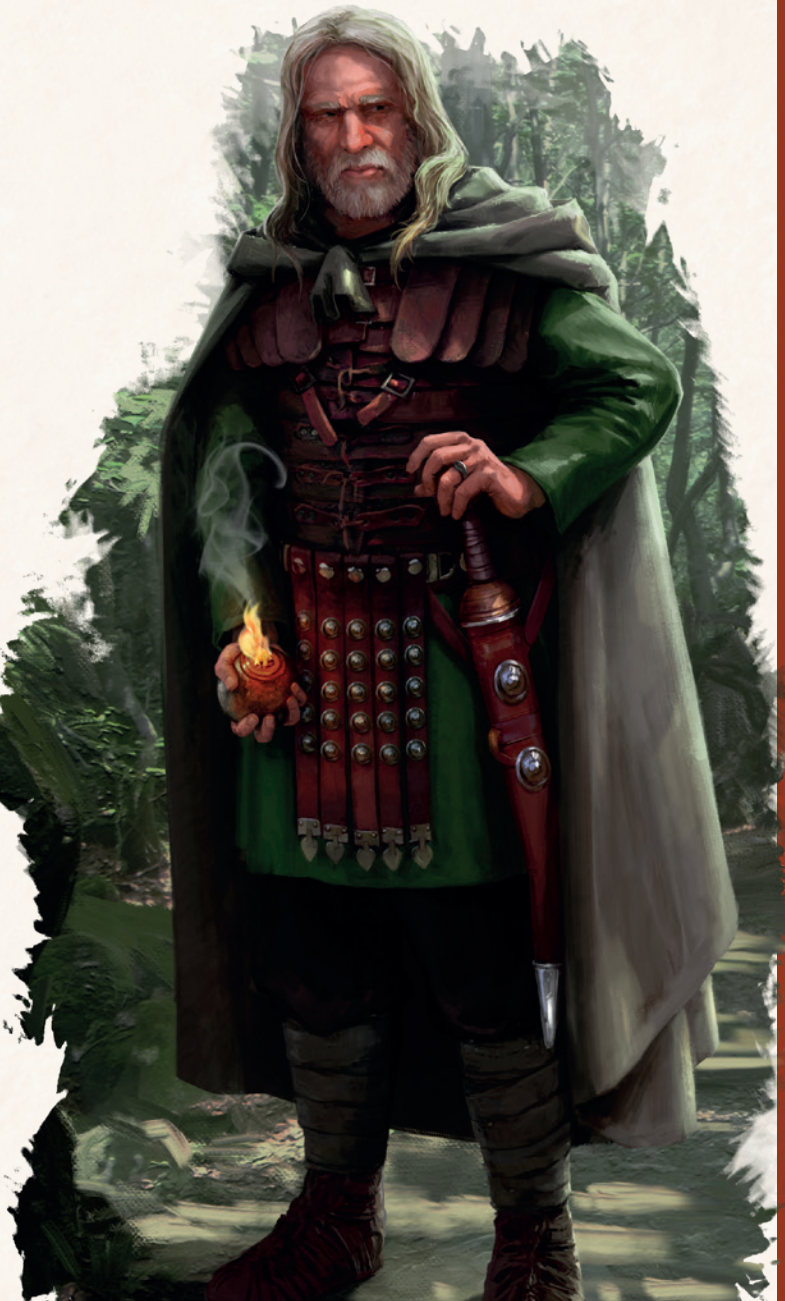
Now the Custodes are expert and famous Vampire hunters. Are they ready to face the Blood Gods?

THE VAMPIRE HUNTER

Esselius
Value: DV8
1 die: De Bello, De Corpore
2 dice: De Magia, Hit Points, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Magia (Vampires), De Scientia, Ratio
Hit Points: 16
Weapons: Sica (Damage 4), Greek Lamps (see page 98)
Protections: Corium Lorica (Protection 3)

- *Special Abilities:* Acute Senses
- *Magic Powers:* Fate Roll

The old physician Esselius is a Scholar, part of the Cohors Arcana from the beginning. Of Germanic origin, this wise and determined Custos has fought the plague of vampirism since his youngest days in his lands of origin, Gallia and Britannia, before heading to Dacia and Thracia. In these regions, he believes hides the most powerful of these monsters, the Nosphoratus behind the pestilence he has been fighting his whole life.
The Demiurge can employ Esselius as a mentor to explain to the characters the details of vampirism, grant them methods, *teknès*, and Indigitamenta to fight Vampires, and lead them through the various scenes.
Should the old physician not be necessary anymore or his presence prove to be too cumbersome, the Demiurge can play the scene “Farewell to Esselius” (see Scene 6).



PART 1
TRANSYLVANIA

SCENE 1:
THE DEAD ARE SWIFT

The Custodes are traveling on their own along the roads of the Dacia on a *carruca dormitoria* assigned to them to move Cohors Arcana materiel to Ulpia Traiana (books, small votive shrines, pharmaka, etc., nothing really useful for the scenario). Their means of transportation is a wagon where they can also sleep, pulled by two healthy draft horses. A comfortable, albeit slow, ride.

In the last days, frequent rains have scythed the region, and the roads are muddy and uneven. Small accidents and deviations have slowed travel, and now night is about to fall. The atmosphere is gloomy and foggy, the forest around them grim and the sky a slate of lead.

All of a sudden, a wheel gets stuck in a muddy ditch, breaking off part of the undercarriage.

To restore the vehicle, they must unload its cargo, push it out of the ditch (**De Corpore** rolls or some ingenuity), and then load the goods back on. To attach another wheel to its iron fitting, however, matters are more complex. A Scholar could repair it, but there are not enough spare parts, and so somebody must reach the closest *mansio* and beg a smith to come and repair the damage.

Whatever the Custodes choose to do, the following happens:

- After an hour, night falls and a group of **Gelloi** gets on the trail of the Custodes.
- The Gelloi attack either the wagon along the road, or whoever is headed to the Mansio, preferring lone travelers. However, they are not fast enough to outrun a horse.
- The number of the Gelloi is variable. The first assaults include (1:1) Gelloi. Then, a second wave numbers (2:1) Gelloi, perfect for a grand chase.
- Should the Gelloi get the upper hand on the characters, enter Esselius, a long time on the trail of Camilla. Esselius defeats a few enemies and then shouts that in the open they are doomed, and they must reach the mansio (*"Run, for the dead are swift!"*).

SCENE 2:
THE TYPICAL MANSIO

The flight under the beating rain to the mansio, whether on wagon, horseback, or foot, should be a dangerous and pressing scene. If the Custodes were successful in restoring the wagon or use their horses, it is a prolonged action that requires 3 **De Natura** rolls (DT 9). If they escape on foot, then it is a prolonged action with 3 **De Corpore** rolls (DT 9) each.

On a failed roll, a Gello catches one of the fugitives or attaches onto a horse or the wagon, and must be eliminated before moving on. Here, too, Esselius can make an appearance if needed, throwing Greek Lamps (see page 98) against the Gelloi.

However they proceed, if the Custodes ditch the wagon, it is destroyed and sacked by the Gelloi and its precious Cohors Arcana cargo cannot be delivered to Ulpia Traiana.

In the mansio, a maiden opens the door and invites the Custodes in, closing the heavy door behind them. The thick wood of the doors and shutters is capable of keeping Gelloi, Wolves, and Brigands outside.

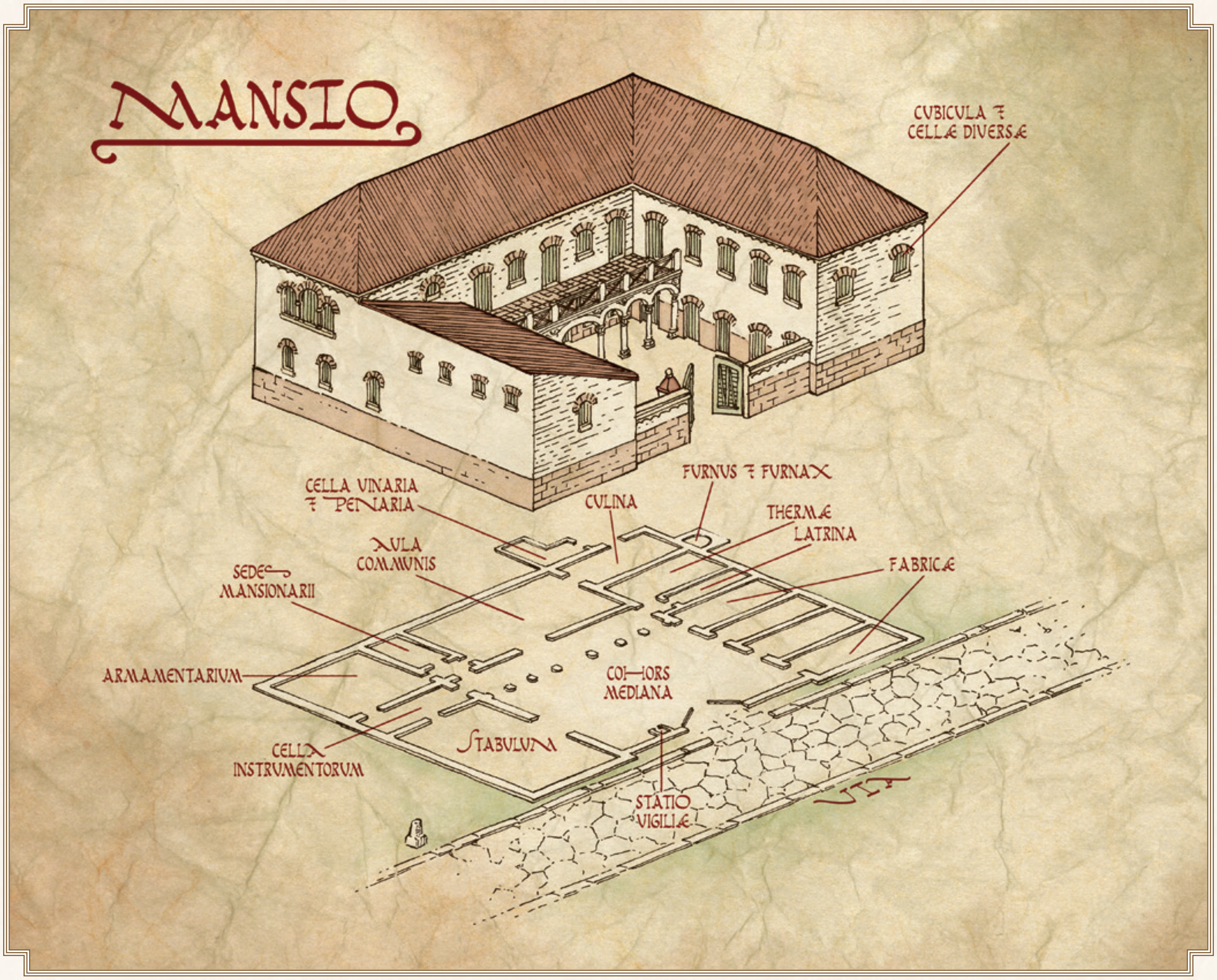
The problem, however, is inside...

SCENE 3: CAMILLA

If the Custodes have wondered where all those Gelloi along the road came from and why there is nobody to be seen around the mansio, the answer is right there in front of them!

This is the moment of deciding what the final enemy of this adventure is to be, or at least to which kin belong the Vampires of this story, whom Esselius has been hunting for a lifetime. On page 123 are the four Nosphorati who, along with their spawn, infest Dacia and Thracia:

- If the preference is to use the stereotype of the "traditional" vampire, the best choice is the cunning and austere **Apletos**. The Vampires of this adventure are described in the Core Rulebook.


MANSIO
CVBICVLA ⁊ CELLÆ DIVERSÆ
CELLA VINARIA ⁊ PENARIA
CVLINA
FVRNVS ⁊ FVRNAX
THERMÆ
LATRINA
AVLA COMMVNIS
SEDES MANSIONARII
FABRICÆ
ARMAMENTARIVM
COHORS MEDIANA
STABVLVM
CELLA INSTRVMENTORVM
STATIO VIGILIÆ
VIA

- If the preference is a Vampire closer to that of Greek or Latin myth, the cruel and ruthless **Abyzou** is perfect. The Vampires of this adventure are the Strixes from the Core Rulebook.
- If the preference is the version closer to Balkan and Transylvanian legends, then **Mormolyce** is the appropriate choice. The Vampires of this adventure are Vrykolakas on page 123 of this module.
- If the preference is a story with more horror elements, the monstrous **Chomodracaena** is perfect. The Vampires of this adventure are the Hirudo, on page 123 of this module.

Whatever the kin of choice, waiting in the mansio for the Custodes and Esselius are **Camilla**, a minor Vampiress (DV6 instead of DV8) and her maidens (0.5:1) **Gelloi**. They are the plebeian servants of the mansio, not yet Vampiresses, but already thirsting for blood. If the Custodes are already experienced, Camilla is a normal Vampire (DV8), and her maidens are newly made Vampires with DV6.

The Demiurge can describe Camilla and her maidens in a manner befitting their form, although they still attempt to be alluring, to avoid fighting in order to feed on their prey. There are few doubts about their evil intentions, and the mansio should soon turn into a battlefield.

THE FIGHT AGAINST THE VAMPIRE.

The mansio is empty and devastated, with only fires, rudimentary torches, thick wooden doors, coal pokers, and kitchen utensils available as improved weapons. If he has not intervened yet, this is the perfect moment to introduce Esselius, heavy with incendiary lamps and silver weapons, ready to help!

If desperate, Camilla opens the doors of the mansio and lets the Gelloi horde in. She will probably lose her dinner, but at least save her life...

If the Custodes manage to survive, making a purifying pyre of the entire place could be a solution to the problem of Vampires in that area.

PART 2
VAMPIRE HUNTERS

With Camilla defeated, Esselius explains he has been following that abject being for months, believing she would lead to the Nosphoratus he has been fighting for years. Camilla could be one of the spawn of Axivarna, the being behind the massacres of Ulpia Traiana in months past, which were merely the last in a list of cruelties that has spanned centuries.

On the way to Ulpia Traiana, Esselius shares as much knowledge about Vampires as he deems appropriate, using any elements available in this module, the Core Rulebook, and any other publication. He explains that a few weeks before, people had started disappearing again from the alleys of Ulpia Traiana, and that this could be a sign of the return of Axivarna.

Once in Ulpia Traiana, the Custodes are invited into the palace of the governor, **Gneus Fabius Macedonicus** (see page 20), who wishes to meet the members of this new special group that has caused so much enthusiasm in Emperor Theodomirus. After the required formalities, and the conferring with the patricians and functionaries is done, the Custodes must then be on the trail of the Torturer.

SCENE 4: THE RETURN OF THE TORTURER

“The Torturer” is the nickname given to the murderous monster who haunted Ulpia Traiana the previous winter, known to the local high society as Axivarna. He earned this nickname recently, when the corpse-filled dungeons of the palace he had rented were found.

During his stay in the capital, however, no act of bloodshed had been recorded. Axivarna and his servants were successful in not being discovered, and the same is happening now. No crime is being reported on the roads, only the odd mysterious disappearance, mostly among travelers and the destitute...

First, the Custodes can explore Ulpia Traiana to understand its layout and life, referencing the Encounters Table on page 32. Then, they must choose how to proceed:

- **Investigating Axivarna’s dealings in town.** The trail is cold, and the patricians of the city have already answered these questions numerous times. The stranger introduced himself as a prince, they invited him to their parties, and nobody ever suspected anything... he was only rather unsettling, along with that Drusilla, his companion. A successful Investigation (DT 9, 3 successes required) yields some information: his contact in town, who rented him the palace, was Marcus Leonius Flaccus, a patrician who introduced him to high society. Flaccus apparently “disappeared” a few days after the arrival of Axivarna, but until a few days ago there was still a living procurator, one Polidorus, who also inherited the supervision of other properties of Flaccus. Following that trail, or that of the Vampire-procurator, leads directly to Scene 5.
- **Following Esselius.** The old man spends much time in the halls of the Cohors Arcana to study and compile his diaries, leaving at night to patrol until just after midnight, when he returns exhausted to his quarters. His patrolling is not very fruitful... save for the tenth night (see further down)!
- **Invoking divine advice with rituals and omens.** In this case, between mysterious visions and dark omens, it is possible to determine that:
  - Vampirism comes from Lilith, the Shadow Mother, an abject creature spited by the gods, especially Apollo.
  - The terrible monster that Esselius has been hunting for years (the Nosphoratus chosen by the Demiurge) slumbers in a rundown crypt, far away from Ulpia Traiana. Should the Custodes scry on it too much, it starts waking and opens a red eye on them...
  - Vampires indeed spread like pestilence all over Dacia and Thracia, and in Ulpia Traiana there have been cases that have, obviously, struck at night.
  - *“You shall find the Torturer at the Home Where Eyes Weep!”*
- **Finding the Home Where Eyes Weep.** It cannot be found, as the prophecy refers to encounter 17 Encounters Table for Ulpia Traiana. If, however, during their patrolling, the group stumbles into event 17 and decides to return on site the following night, the Custodes automatically face encounter 30.
- **Exploring and keeping the city under surveillance.** For every day or night the group spends patrolling Ulpia Traiana, roll on the Encounters Table on page 32. If the roll is an encounter they have already had, pick the one immediately after that has not happened yet. Encounters 22, 29 and 30 trigger Scene 5 - “The Guest of Axivarna”.
- **Investigating the dwelling of Axivarna and the dungeon of the Torturer.** A great idea! This, too, is an Investigation, requiring 6 successes at DT 12, as the site has been thoroughly inspected and gone through by numerous functionaries. When they have obtained the required amount of successes, the Custodes find a secret passage leading to the sewers of the city.

During the Custodes' research, the Torturer does not sit idle. Every two days from the arrival of the Custodes, another victim disappears. If they still have no solid clues on the tenth day, it is Esselius who summons the Custodes and leads them to the sewers; he has just witnessed the kidnapping of a beggar in an alley and needs reinforcements!

One way or another, the Custodes make their way to the sewers of the city. Those hiding spots had been examined multiple times (probably even by the Custodes themselves), but nothing interesting had ever come out of them. This time, it is different. The trail leads to a segment that feeds into an underground canal, then into a river that crosses the city. The cloaca is used only as a safe way in and out of town, and the Vampires hide in a rustic and abandoned villa right outside the walls, along the water.

SCENE 5: THE GUEST OF AXIVARNA

Following any of the numerous trails (Vampire or Gelloi fugitives, fleeing rats, dark omens, secret passages, hints from Esselius, Polidorus, or property rented by Axivarna), the Custodes arrive during the night at the villa of Marcus Leonius Flaccus, right outside the walls of Ulpia Traiana. When they are nearby, a gurgling scream tells them something is happening, and it is better to intervene immediately before the Torturer kills another victim.

The inside of the complex is desolate, covered in dust and weeds. To enter, they need to either bash in the boarded doors or climb the outer perimeter wall. Signs of looting are visible everywhere, and if the Custodes are following somebody to the villa, they know a secret way in. Some rooms have corpses and human skeletons, who seems to have met a violent end: limbs are mutilated, heads cut off, etc. A specific observation shows the victims were dismembered with great strength and half devoured.

How many and which creatures the Custodes face in the villa is left to the Demiurge, and depends upon the experience and preparation the Custodes have had at that moment, and also upon which of the Nosphorati the Demiurge has chosen as the main villain. However, the villa is at their disposal in which to launch a Vampire hunt rich with plot twists!

- **Abject Gelloi (1:1, 1.5:1, 2:1, or 3:1).** These are the lowly minions of the Torturer, the ones who kidnap his victims in the surrounding countryside or in they alleys of Ulpia Traiana, and during the day guard the complex and the resting place of the vampire. They are locals, citizens of various rank beyond any suspicion, bent by the will of the Torturer.
- **Owls, Rats, Wolves, and Servants.** Depending on which kind of Vampire is used for this module, some rooms are occupied by beings ready to be summoned by the Invite magic power of the Torturer.
- **The Torturer.** Polidorus was a trusted servant of Axivarna and procurer of his possessions in town, so skilled with ledgers and documents that he has not left any trace of his involvement. The villa where he hid Elenora is another of the holdings of his master, abandoned for decades on purpose. Now that skulking individual is a lesser Vampire (DV6), bound to obey Elenora, to the point where he would sacrifice himself for her without a second thought.
- **Elenora.** This is the woman who was screaming before, out of hunger. The woman, looking like a pallid and emaciated victim of the Torturer, is an actual Vampire (DV8), and at the moment is the crazed leader of this community of bloodsuckers. Forgotten by Axivarna, and having subdued Polidorus, she is unable to make use of her experience and cunning to either feed or face the Custodes, so she pretends to be a poor victim in distress before using her Enchantment, Order, and Vampiric Strength magic powers to fight the group.

SCENE 6: DRUSILLA!

Just when everything seems to be clarified and the Custodes are finishing their confrontation with Elenora and her minions, a door is blown into the air in a prodigious display of Vampiric Strength, and Drusilla makes her appearance. This Vampiress (DV10), once of illustrious Roman origins, is the true mind behind the contagion of Camilla and Elenor, kin and right-hand woman of Axivarna. Alerted by the missives sent by Polidorus before falling prey to Elenora, Axivarna is in fact much worried that what is happening in Ulpia Traiana might draw too much attention and leave a trail to him. This is why he sent Drusilla to cover his tracks before it is too late, with the order of exterminating all the Gelloi of the city, Polidorus, Elenora, and, if possible, the Custodes.

What a stroke of luck, both Vampiresses in the same place, far from prying eyes and ears!

In combat, Drusilla relies on her superhuman strength and speed, as well as the Invite magic power, calling forth swarms of loyal creatures to use as distractions. She will never surrender, and fights until either she or everybody else in the villa is dead.

PART 3

THE WRATH OF THE BLOOD GODS

Once the Vampires and their followers are defeated, the Custodes have definitively dealt with them in Ulpia Traiana. Capturing Polidorus (all are willing to cooperate with the Cohors Arcana in exchange for their un-life, but only he knows anything of use) yields a great bounty of information about this plague and the Blood Gods to the officers and scholars of the region.

Now, the greater picture of the trail of blood that soaks Dacia and Thracia seems a little clearer. Elenora, Camilla, and Drusilla are all blood descendants of Axivarna, an Ancient Vampire usually residing in Philippopolis, who has moved to Dacia only for a short period of time, as men go on a hunt...

The time to deal with him has come!

SCENE 7: FAREWELL TO ESSELIUS

At this point, the Custodes should be expert and skilled enough to continue their mission on their own. If the Demiurge wishes to add a dash of tragedy, at the end of the fighting, the old physician is mortally wounded and breathes his last words of farewell. Otherwise, stern and relentless as usual, after a few days at the headquarters, Esselius packs his belongings and prepares to leave. As the Custodes head to Philippopolis, he wishes to speak with the scholars of Apollonia, who might know the secrets of his dark enemy. They shall soon meet again!

Anyway, Esselius gifts the Custodes a couple of his famous Greek Lamps. He has shared the secret of their construction with the smiths of the Cohors, and they are now available for those who need them.

SCENE 8: THE HUNT CONTINUES

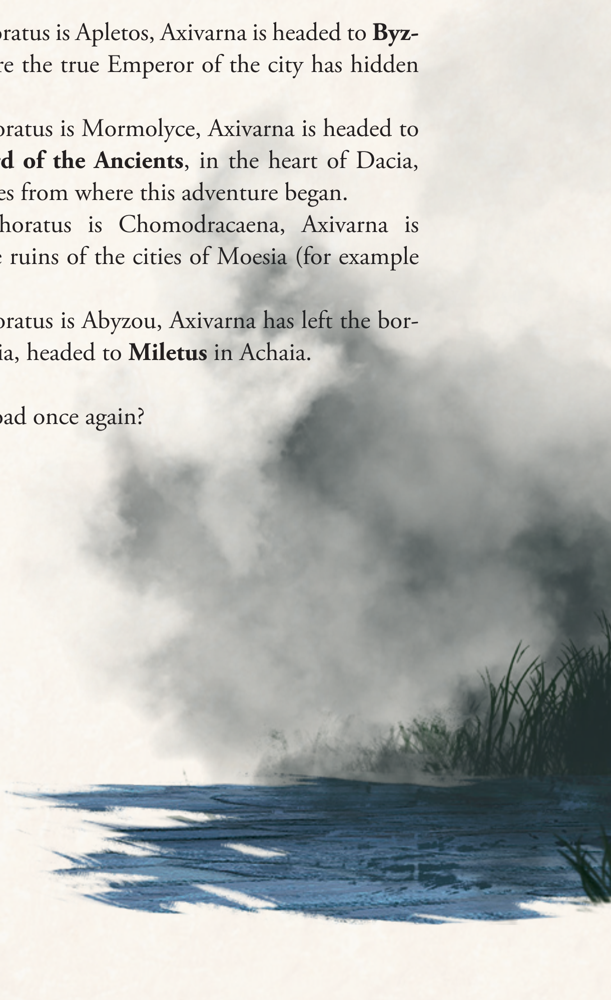
After the farewell to Esselius, the Custodes obtain any means of support available to chase Axivarna and move to Philippopolis. The journey is long and intense, even on the best-kept provincial roads, and the Demiurge should let the Custodes decide how to get there. The Encounters Tables of Old Dacia and Moesia Inferior on page 37 should be used at least once per individual region they cross, while those for generic encounters and travel accidents are perfect should the group wish to sail the Black Sea headed for Moesia Superior and Thracia.

Once in Philippopolis, the home of Axivarna has been found in the meantime, but when the Custodes spring into action with the aid of legionaries and auxiliaries, the palace turns out to be empty, but outside about ten Gelloi have been left a distraction on site. Sensing the death of his beloved spawn Drusilla, Axivarna has fled, furious but also scared!

One moon earlier, it seems, a luxurious *carpentum* with curtains of black silk, pulled by four horses as dark as nightmares, had left the city. Feeling pursued, Axivarna was forced to leave the region to ask hospitality and shelter of his progenitor, the Nosphoratus who granted him un-life centuries before. The ferocious Vampire now has an advantage, but his wagon did not pass unseen, and finding it is time-consuming but not difficult. The Custodes will be able to piece together his destination, from which Blood God he has asked hospitality, and to where he will disappear before it is too late.

- If the Nosphoratus is Apletos, Axivarna is headed to **Byzantium**, where the true Emperor of the city has hidden for millennia.
- If the Nosphoratus is Mormolyce, Axivarna is headed to the **Graveyard of the Ancients**, in the heart of Dacia, but a few miles from where this adventure began.
- If the Nosphoratus is Chomodracaena, Axivarna is headed to the ruins of the cities of Moesia (for example **Histria**).
- If the Nosphoratus is Abyzou, Axivarna has left the borders of Thracia, headed to **Miletus** in Achaia.

Ready to hit the road once again?



CONCLUSION

Chasing the black coach of Axivarna to the lair of his progenitor Nosphoratus, facing a Blood God in the flesh and canines, awakened from their torpor and angered, as well as their pack of Ancient Vampires, servants, cultists, and spawn, is a mission worthy of an entire, proper campaign. This is the reason why we chose to avoid hastily including it here.

The Demiurge can take inspiration from the contents of this book to weave the most epic Vampire hunt of antiquity, or postpone the deed to the future, letting the Custodes carry out other missions first, such as those in this module. After all, Vampires are not going anywhere... they have been there for centuries and can wait a few extra years!

This adventure yields additional Experience Points according to the following parameters:

- The Custodes have destroyed Camilla and her maidens: +1 Experience Point
- The Custodes have delivered to Ulpia Traiana the cargo of the Cohors Arcana: +1 Experience Point
- The Custodes discovered and fought the Torturer within the first week after their arrival in Ulpia Traiana: +1 Experience Point
- The Custodes have captured Polidorus “alive” for questioning: +1 Experience Point
- The Custodes were successful in killing Elenora and Drusilla: +1 Experience Point each
- The Custodes have chased the black coach to its destination and discovered where the Nosphoratus is located: +3 Experience Points

But what if the Custodes were beaten?

There are numerous ways to die in this adventure, and sometimes death is only the beginning...

Dying by Camilla, Elenora, or Drusilla means being torn apart by their fury, without the horror of being reborn as a Vampire. Alternatively, the Custodes might be able to conclude the mission, but not to kill the three dark ladies. At that point, the alluring Camilla, the crazed Elenora, and the wrathful Drusilla will thirst for vengeance on those mortals who meddled in their business and got away from their bite...

UNDER A BANNER OF GOLD

PLAYER INTRODUCTION

The Custodes are in Heraclia, at the mouth of the Danuvium, right at the border with Scythia, after traveling down the river or before taking a ship of the limes fleet. They are either back from their last mission or about to leave for their next assignment, and are housed in the quarters of the Cohors Arcana.

One night they are awoken and called for an emergency. Something has happened at a town building, and the soldiers are terrified. Apparently, somebody summoned and unleashed a demon in town, and only the Custodes can stop it!

DEMIURGE INTRODUCTION

The "demon" unleashed in the night of Heraclia is in truth a specter, a Cimmerian Shadow that appeared in the *macella* (open markets). Days before, a gang of relic thieves from Tomis crossed the Danuvium in secret and looted the sepulcher of a Cimmerian princess, Sandamme, taking by mistake not just her treasure, but also parts of her earthly essence contained in precious reliquaries. After returning south of the limes, passing by Heraclia, the gang sold some artifacts of moderate value, including the reliquaries, to a trader named Ermippos, who owns a shop in the macella.

After closing, far from prying eyes, Ermippos was cleaning and preparing for exposition the wares he had bought from the Tomb Robbers when the enraged specter manifested in his shop, frightening him to death. Still furious about the affront and confused from being in a foreign land, the Cimmerian Shadow haunts the building and attacks anyone inside.

After dealing with that threat, the Custodes will end up investigating the Tomb Robber gang and will make their way to Tomis, where the leader of the pillagers is organizing a new expedition. He is called **Diomedes Postumus**, a treasure hunting veteran and known adventurer of the region.

Instead of defeating the group, however, the Custodes are tasked with secretly joining the next expedition of Diomedes to find out how these relic hunters survive in Hun-occupied lands and also map part of that region.

There begins a journey that brings them by ship to Olbia, and from there to the desolate lands of Scythia. Only then does the mission become clear: the secret objective of Diomedes is not another Cimmerian tomb, but the grave of Attila himself, said to contain the largest treasure of all time...

Will the Custodes be successful in their expedition to such a remote destination? Will they find the tomb of the Scourge of the Gods? Most of all, what will they do when the largest treasure of all time is right in front of them, within arm's reach?

Adventure Average Value: 8 EP

SYNOPSIS

This mission is set in Moesia Inferior, on the Black Sea, and on the cold, wind-swept plains of Scythia. It is divided into four parts, of which the fourth is an optional bonus section.

PART 1: TOMB ROBBERS

The Custodes face a Cimmerian Shadow that appeared during the night in the military citadel of Heraclia, then chase the Tomb Robbers who caused its wrath. They pursue their quarry to Tomis, where they discover another expedition is about to leave.

PART 2: MURKY WATERS

Drawn by the possibility of discovering the secrets of enemies beyond the border, the Custodes join the expedition. The group crosses the Black Sea, headed to Olbia.

PART 3: THE GRAVE OF THE LORD OF THE HORDE

The Custodes travel from Olbia, through the savage plains of Scythia, to the largest treasure in history.

PART 4: THE VALLEY OF DEATH

The Custodes venture into the hidden gorge hiding the Tomb of Attila and prepare to face their greatest enemy.

PART 1
TOMB ROBBERS

Suddenly awakened by a garrison officer, the Custodes can barely grab their amulets and weapons before being led to the macella.

SCENE 1:
FEAR AND MAYHEM AT THE MACELLA

The town building struck by what looks like a Demon is the macella, a market formed by a courtyard with a center lavatory, surrounded by a simple but solid porch, with shops selling all manner of wares. Fear spread right after the market closed, when screams came from one of the shops. The Vigiles and curious bystanders could not get there before the structure burned in spectral fires, echoed by screams and shouts in an unknown language.

The first responders were gripped by terror and fled, or were attacked by something, falling dead or unconscious on the ground.

As the second wave of Vigiles and functionaries was called in, upon the macella fell a pall of unnatural darkness, and the wailing and screaming resumed. Then the Custodes were urgently called in, now formally invited to deal with the matter.

The structure of the macella of Heraclia is simple, with two main entrances, on the porch and on the central court. If one were to climb onto the roof, they could look directly into the courtyard from above (**De Corpore** roll**,** DT 9) or take the door of one of the shops with an access on the road, picking its simple lock (DT 6, a II Degree of Success is required to avoid making noise). If the Custodes use their knowledge and supernatural capacities to investigate the danger before making their entrance, they might glean clues about what is happening and what it is they are facing, and learn that at dawn the haunting presence would leave on its own. However, inside the building are trapped, terrified people that should be rescued.

Princess Sandamme is a powerful and vengeful specter, accidentally unleashed by trader Ermippos as he was examining the wares purchased that day from the group of Diomedes. The ghost is so powerful and angered that she has cast an impenetrable pall of shadow that cannot be dispelled (using her Shadows magic power) on the central courtyard, the two accesses, and the shop of Ermippos.

With her spectral touch, she has already consumed numerous Vigiles and shopkeepers, and now wanders under the porches, chasing other victims inside the remaining shops. If the Custodes waste time, Sandamme finds the occupied stores, breaks through the doors, and takes whoever is inside, among screams of terror and pleas for mercy. Sandamme uses the profile for Cimmerian Shadows, on page 121.

FIGHT WITH SANDAMME

Observing the open courtyard from the roof allows spotting the specter of princess Sandamme, and perhaps hitting her or drawing her into the open, where she loses the advantages of the Shadows. Distracting her, using diplomacy, and offering a proper sacrifice to calm her down and speak to her (**Auctoritas** or **De Societate** roll, DT 9) is equally advantageous, but the Custodes must conduct their negotiations and any rituals in the thickest darkness of the central courtyard (*Blinded*), or Sandamme will not trust them.

It is possible to spot the shop with the reliquaries bought by Ermippos, as it is the only one completely obscured, like the courtyard, and either destroy them or promise to return them to her tomb.

Once Sandamme is defeated or placated and her reliquaries have been taken care of, the Shadows dissipate, the threat vanishes, and it is possible to help those the specter did not kill.

SCENE 2:
ON THE TRAIL OF THE GANG

Ermippos is dead, but the Custodes can still investigate what has happened, including, if they are capable of such a feat, interrogating the deceased. Other, more mundane, methods include asking his relatives or fellow shopkeepers what could have happened. Intimidation, the leverage of authority, empathy, and the like are all useful in shedding light on this mystery, and, depending on what the group chooses to do, the rolls to gather such information have DT 6 or 9.

It is also possible find on the body of the trader a letter from Diomedes, greeting him as "my good friend, Ermippos" and recommending to him the quality and correctness of the bearers of that letter, his trusted collaborators. It is, on all accounts, a missive proving the authenticity and value of the findings the thieves stole.

Heraclian command has additional information to share. Diomedes Postumus is a known adventurer, treasure hunter, and smuggler, with a base in Tomis, down south. He mostly deals in sacking forgotten tombs and Cimmerian barrows, his goons moving in and out of the border on both land and sea, seemingly at will. His gang is made of numerous independent groups and bands, but it is he who pulls all the strings. He is cunning and prudent, and so it has not been possible to accuse him of anything, so far. However, should the Custodes capture the group who sold the reliquary of Sandamme to Ermippos, there might be enough evidence to arrest him.

In that same moment, likely with a day of advantage, the Tomb Robbers are headed southeast, riding good Thracian steeds they bought with the money from Ermippos. If the Custodes catch or anticipate them, the chances of dealing with the whole gang are high.

The Custodes have time to gather their things, make any propitiatory rituals, draw Sortes, and anything else before leaving at dawn on the tracks of the pillagers.

SCENE 3: ON THE GREEN PLAINS OF MOESIA

First, the Custodes can take either Scythian or Thracian horses. In the latter case (coursers or light or heavy warhorses), the superb animals are particularly dependable, strong, and well trained (see sidebar on page 53).

Leaving Heraclia at dawn and taking the roads and trails of the countryside, it is extremely hard to find the trail of the thieves, but asking travelers and merchants along the path yields some information. The Demiurge can use the contents of the paragraph about Moesia to enrich their descriptions, insert encounters and dangers, or give advantages or disadvantages to the Custodes.

To chase the thieves, the characters need 3 successes on a prolonged **De Societate** action (DT 9), representing all the information they can find along the road. Each roll represents a day on horseback on the trails of the region. Each failure triggers a random encounter from the Encounters Table on page 56 (numbers 1-5 happen the following night; 6-10 happen during their travels; 11-20 happen in towns and small settlements along the road). Alternatively, each of those rolls can be avoided with a magical or Divination practice led by the Custodes, according to the relevant rules.

If the Custodes obtain three consecutive successes, they catch the pillagers by surprise among the ruins of Histria, where they have a hideout.

Should the Custodes fail once before the 3 required successes, they reach them outside of Histria, but are sighted and the thieves will be ready for a fight.

Should the Custodes fail two or three times before the 3 required successes, the thieves realize they are followed and ambush the Custodes in Histria.

With more failures, the trail grows cold and the mission is failed. However, if they wish, the Custodes can proceed and look for the adventurer in town and from there enter his expedition.

Tomb Robbers
Average Value: DV5
1 die: De Magia (Superstitions), Ratio
2 dice: De Bello, De Natura, Hit Points, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Corpore
Hit Points: 10
Weapons: Scramasax (Damage 5), Sling (Damage 3)
Protections: Corium Lorica (Protection 3)

- *Special Abilities:* Stealthy

The Leader *has DV6 and uses an Arcus (Damage 6) instead of the Sling.*

FIGHT WITH THE TOMB ROBBERS

Histria is a city in ruin, a field of ruins, hiding spots, and rubble. If the Custodes have made their way here without failing any rolls, they can follow the tracks of the thieves into town and surprise them as they rest in a decrepit library. There are **1.5:1, + 1 Leader**, and they can easily be caught by surprise, overpowered, or threatened with authority or the use of force.

If the Custodes have failed 1 roll, the thieves see them coming at the last moment and can decide to leave or fight on horseback, as any expert Thracian would.

If the Custodes have failed two or three rolls, the scene looks deserted, but the thieves are hiding in wait to catch the Custodes from behind, unless they pass a **Sensibilitas** roll (DT 9).

If they survive the combat, those thieves still alive surrender. If interrogated, they provide any needed evidence and are willing to testify against Diomedes Postumus, and so to the Custodes it is left only to turn them in to the authorities of Tomis to complete their mission. Right?

Not quite.

PART 2
MURKY WATERS

There is one problem with the arrest of Diomedes Postumus and the definitive dissolution of his gang of relic hunters. In spite of the charges of smuggling illicit goods and necromantic practices, when the Custodes turn the thieves in to the magistrates of Tomis, they discover the adventurer is in truth a *Beneficiarius,* honorably discharged from the army and presently working as *speculator* (spy) of Rome in Moesia and beyond the border. Everybody knows he has been profiting off of his traffics, but at the same time Diomedes has fed invaluable information on the movements of Hun troops in Scythia and Tauris, making up-to-date maps, and leading a network of informants, explorers, and sappers (his gang) that could be called in support to military operations beyond the limes.

Because of this, Diomedes is untouchable, and his dealings are not to be hampered any further, unbeknownst to the officers of Heraclia.

There is, however, another opportunity. The Custodes could join the next expedition, led by Diomedes, and see with their own eyes what happens beyond the border. It could be first-hand information, although the only issue is that Diomedes might not agree...

SCENE 4:
VENTURE CUSTODES!

Have you ever dreamed of leaving the Empire behind and traveling beyond the limes, in savage and free lands where there is no law and the world is there to be discovered? Have you ever imagined leaving behind uniforms and ranks and delving into the endless wilderness, only the starry sky above and a map in your hand, searching for fame and glory? Well, the Cohors Arcana has just authorized your expedition into the green plains of Scythia, following a dashing adventurer and his group of treasure hunters.

There is but one formality to take care of. The group must convince or trick Diomedes into letting the Custodes participate in his endeavor. Depending on how Part 1 of the mission went, the Custodes could be considered friendly or not by the gang and, by extension, its leader, or vice versa. There are, then, a few possibilities:

- **A ruse.** If the gang and Diomedes do not want the Cohors Arcana meddling in their affairs, the only way to join the expedition is to pretend to be adventurers looking for a job and convince the leader to let them in to replace those members of gang “oddly missing” after their last job. The skills of the Custodes are unusual for adventurers, and Diomedes is not stupid, smelling Cohors Arcana a mile away. The characters, then, need not only to convince him, but also to come up with a decent alibi to be admitted into the group.
- **A deal.** If everybody plays out in the open and there is no need for trickery and blackmail, Diomedes simply accepts the Custodes into the expedition: their skills are undeniable and will be extremely useful during the journey. The only point he wishes to be extremely clear is that the Custodes must actually follow him and help him secure the famed treasure he has set his eyes upon. In the meantime, they can map and scout to their hearts’ content...
- **Extortion.** If there is no way to trick Diomedes or he and the Custodes cannot come to an agreement, the only way for progress is to blackmail Diomedes and go against the will of the magistrates of the city. He will either take them along on the expedition or the Custodes will ruin his business and arrest or kill all of them. This possibility (or any other the players come up with) might work, but the Demiurge should portray the tension between the Custodes and the gang, as everybody is both risking and expecting a stab in the back...

In any case, the rules for Audiences to come to an agreement with Diomedes are ideal in this instance. The adventurer has doubts about the whole business (6 successes required), and the request of the Custodes is more or less reasonable, depending on what happened earlier (DT 6, 9, or 12). In case of failure, the only option left is, of course, extortion.

SCENE 5:
ON BLACK WAVES

Once the Custodes are admitted into the expedition, they have a few days to prepare. They can restore their Hit Points to maximum and attempt to recover lost Pietas Points. This is likely to be the last shrine the Custodes see for weeks, so they’d better take advantage of the occasion.

If the Custodes want to do something in Tomis before leaving, they can roll one last time on the Encounters Table on page 57, but in doing so sacrifice their chance to rest.

THE MEMBERS OF THE EXPEDITION

Diomedes Postumus
Value: DV8
1 die: De Natura, Sensibilitas
2 dice: De Bello, De Corpore, De Societate, Hit Points, Ratio
3 dice: -
Hit Points: 16
Weapons: Ensis (Damage 8), Pugio (Damage 3)
Protections: Lorica Plumata (Protection 6)

- *Special Abilities:* Acute Senses

Diomedes Postumus, so called because at the end of his last glorious mission he lay between life and death (some instead say "dead") for three days. After that mysterious episode, of which he does not speak, he received numerous military commendations and an honorable discharge from his previous unit, the Legio Primigenia of Romula, in Dacia. Diomedes is a melancholic and restless individual, but also a capable organizer and a good leader. His physical prowess and determination are those of a Thracian war veteran who has seen things that few can imagine, but his dark side sometimes resurfaces.

Frea the Black
Value: DV8
1 die: De Bello, De Corpore, Hit Points, Ratio
2 dice: De Natura, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Magia
Hit Points: 8
Weapons: Sica (Damage 4)
Protections: Corium Lorica (Protection 3)

- *Magic Powers:* Curse (2DV, the victim must *hear* Frea), Enchantment (1DV, Frea must *stare* at her victim), Fate Roll, Weather Manipulation

Longtime adventuring companion of Diomedes, she is his right hand and the second in command of the gang. Of Dacian origin, she knows numerous languages and much dark lore, and has always been the guide in the most important expeditions concerning dark and supernatural secrets. When asked which gods she honors, which superior authority she recognizes, or what philosophy shapes her path, the answer is always the same: "none."

Antarah
Value: DV8
1 die: Ratio, Sensibilitas
2 dice: De Bello, De Natura
3 dice: De Corpore, Hit Points
Hit Points: 24
Weapons: two Kopesh (Damage 7)
Protections: Helmet, Greaves, and Lorica Manica (Protection 3)

- *Special Abilities:* Bloodthirsty

Tall, tough, and muscled, Antarah is a Garamantes warrior extremely loyal to Frea and Diomedes, the strongest of the thieves. It is said he fought ad monstra as a Dimachaerus for a long time, and that Diomedes paid his weight in gold to have him as his shadow. If that was true, among all the treasures he has gathered in the past, loyal Antarah could still be his best deal. The group includes another **(1:1)** lesser **Tomb Robbers** with the profile from Scene 3.

When they are ready (and have left the horses and any insignia of the Cohors Arcana or the Empire behind), after a few days the small boat that will bring the Custodes to the north docks in Tomis. It is a fishing boat from Salmydessus, crewed by a handful of utterly untrustworthy cutthroats. If the Custodes have already dealt with the cutthroats, pirates, and whalers of that wretched port, they are dealing with a whole slew of old acquaintances. What a nice journey!

Tension from old feuds aside, these cutthroats-turned-sailors have neither the will nor the chance to attack or betray the members of the expedition. Not yet, at least...

The journey on the Pontus Euxinus is smooth, then, with neither storms nor pirates in sight... the worst of the lot are already on board!

Their cover is that of returning fishermen, required to show full nets at the docks. When their destination is in sight, it is time to fish to justify their cover, an activity that the Custodes are about to discover can be quite dangerous.

As they are raising the nets with the other sailors, one of them pushes overboard the Custos they have the most resentment for (if there were arguments before), or the one with the lowest De Bello score. Around the boat they have spotted a school of **Plutonian Fish** (see page 113) gathered around the nets, and have chosen to eliminate one of the unwanted passengers. The Custos might spot the threat (**Sensibilitas**, DT 9) and avoid being thrown overboard (**Coordinatio**, DT 6), otherwise they fall in the midst of a school of hungry horrors of the depths.

Now, if the Custodes blackmailed their way into the expedition, the signal is given, and all the Tomb Robbers of Diomedes and the sailors band together to kill the intruders or throw them overboard. Otherwise, after attempting to rescue the Custos in the water, Diomedes and his gang take the side of the Custodes and propose a "bath" for the Salmydessus pirates. After all, supposing they manage to avoid the monsters of the depths, the shore should not be more than a couple days away swimming...

Salmydessus Cutthroats
Average Value: DV5
1 die: Ratio
2 dice: De Bello, De Corpore, Hit Points, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Natura (Sailing)
Hit Points: 10
Weapons: Improvised Weapons (Damage 4)
Protections: None

***Cassius**, their leader, has DV6.*

SCENE 6:
THE CITY OF THIEVES

Having dealt with the sailors ("They would have betrayed us anyway."), Diomedes explains that the next leg of their journey is reaching Olbia, a city in the hands of a Scythian raider leader called **Edico** (see page 78), who has turned it into his personal fief, a center of smuggling and piracy independent from both Rome and the Huns. He also explains that without him (should life on board become tense), Edico and his goons would never let them land.

He leads the group to Olbia (see page 78), pays the fee to the scum watching over the docks, and is lead to Edico alongside the characters. Here, the old satrap, after pocketing the sacks of silver and gifts from Diomedes, invites all to a mighty, decadent feast. If the Custodes refuse the opulent hospitality of Edico, they must pass a **De Societate** roll (DT 9) to not offend the king of Olbia's thieves. Otherwise, they must pass a **Vigor** roll (DT 9) to not crash to the floor at the end of the feast (but in the meantime can have fun as they please...). In either case of failure, the Custos would end up in guarded chambers of the palace; otherwise, they are free to leave during the night.

When the feast is over, and Edico has retreated to his quarters to rest, Diomedes tells the Custodes it is time to leave. The gifts and the bribe for free passage in the city were given, and the feast all in all was fun, but come morning the old raider might change his mind.

First, if there are Custodes under watch, they must be freed or escape through the windows (**De Corpore**, DT 9). Then, they need to leave the palace and cross the City of Thieves without being noticed, to the north gates of Olbia. This is a prolonged action of 3 **De Corpore** (DT 6) rolls for each character. For every Degree of Success beyond the first, a member of the group can help another who has failed the test, "lending" them a success (the Tomb Robbers do not roll).

For every segment of the escape, if even one fugitive fails and cannot be helped, a group of Edico's goons appears behind the group and intervenes, **1.5:1 Brigands** that cannot be corrupted or swayed in any other manner.

After sneaking out of the palace (first roll), crossing the sleeping city where only drunkards and the last socialites still wander the streets (second roll), and stealing Scythian Horses from a stable close to the north gates of the city (third roll), the Custodes, Diomedes, and what is left of the expedition can vanish into the plains of Scythia and leave the City of Thieves behind them...

"Edico will not be angry anyway," says Diomedes with a smile, *"we left him Cassius' ship in exchange!"*

PART 3
THE SEPULCHER OF THE LORD OF THE HORDE

The latest events have now cemented the group. It is time for Diomedes to tell the Custodes the secrets of his expedition. The goal of the journey is not any Cimmerian tomb, but the Mausoleum of Attila, where the Lord of the Horde had gathered all the treasure sacked from the cities and empires of half the world, waiting for his death.

In this moment, although the rumors seem to not agree, Attila would be alive and well (or at least alive) in the East, completely absorbed in the task of rebuilding a horde worthy of such a name after the repeated defeats and the deaths of his three eldest sons. His tomb, however, is already made, foreseeing his upcoming departure, and presently serves as a giant secret depository of the gold of the Horde. Although all the slaves that built it were supposedly killed, the secret of its position was somehow leaked, and now Diomedes owns the map that leads to the largest treasure in history.

With tough horses under their saddles and good weapons on their hips, the expedition now is ready to follow the map and find the hidden tomb of the Scourge of the Gods.

SCENE 7:
ABOUT THE PLAINS OF SCYTHIA

The following weeks are the heart of the journey in the savage lands: endless untamed landscapes, crossed by powerful rivers and dotted with sharp hills, mires, and thick forests. Diomedes chose the season well, and the storms that occasionally fall on the expedition do not hinder its progress. Game is abundant, supplies not an issue.

This is also an occasion for the contubernium to study Diomedes' map in detail, observe the lay of the land, and gauge the distance that Hun groups cover when they are occasionally seen riding on that land. The Custodes could map and study these lands for when they return home, earning them extra Experience Points at the end of this adventure.

The Demiurge can place in this part of the journey the encounters and dangers they prefer. Here are some examples:

A group of pillagers of the Horde has found the tracks of the expedition and now is chasing them at breakneck speed, screaming and shaking blades… Use the profile for **Mounted Nomads**.

A group of **Amazons** ambushes the expedition, which is guilty of crossing the invisible lines that mark their kingdom.

The expedition finds itself in the hunting grounds of a perfidious and cunning **Daughter of Echidna**, who strikes either when the group splits to forage or in the dead of night.

When this part of the journey concludes, the Custodes sight in the distance their next step, the River of Lambs.

SCENE 8:
AGNUS SCYTHICUS

According to the map of Diomedes, the tomb of Attila was built along the River of Lambs in a narrow vale that should open somewhere in the region where the expedition has just arrived. The problem is that the Mausoleum was carefully hidden, and the map is not precise, but refers to a mysterious "Tree of Lambs", of which Diomedes and his people do not know much. They need to Explore the area around the river with a prolonged action (see Core Rulebook) to find this unusual tree...

The Custodes and the gang of Diomedes split up, and each group explores a specific bank of the river. The terrain is harsh, increasing the number of required successes to 6, with every roll corresponding to roughly half a day of searching. If any of the Custodes passes a **De Magia** or **De Natura** roll (DT 12), then they are well aware of what the Tree of Lambs is and can describe it to the others, lowering the DT to 9.

If the Custodes are successful in the Exploration within the first day (the first two rounds of searching, morning and evening), they find the objective themselves; otherwise, Diomedes or one of his beats them to it. The mystery is then solved; the entrance to the narrow rocky vale that Diomedes is looking for is hidden behind an enormous tree of unknown nature, around which graze some harmless-looking "lambs"… although it is an *Agnus Scythicus*, a **Plant Lamb** (see page 112)!

The monster can be avoided in numerous ways (the nomads take a path that steers well clear), but only if the Custodes have any idea of what manner of creature they have in front of them. Otherwise, the first to try to pass is caught in the vines and branches of this monster!

SCENE 9: THE FAREWELL

At this point in the adventure, Diomedes and his own, if still alive and on good terms with the Custodes, take their leave from the contubernium.

"Friends!" says Diomedes, vigorously clasping the arms of the Custodes. *"We have gone long and far, performed admirable deeds, and it has been an honor for us to ride by your side. You have kept your word, and I am sure you gathered all the information you needed. I do not bind you any longer. Like you, I can read the omens, too, and I feel a dreadful threat hiding beyond this gorge, poised to strike.*

The vengeance of Attila, the fury of his Horde, and the curses and deadly traps laid in this place speak of an unpleasant end for this adventure and any who take one more step. If you wish to keep pleasant memories of what we have done together and to remember these days with a smile instead of a gasp of horror, if you wish to save your lives and souls and to keep serving Rome, go! We shall meet again in Byzantium, on the Golden Horn, to drink white wine with resin and watch the sea..."

Here the Custodes have their last chance to turn their horses and leave. The Demiurge can end the adventure here with a fade to black, as the contubernium rides to the southwest into the sunset, or add new encounters and endless deeds for the return journey back to the Danuvium. Either way, the adventure ends here, and the Demiurge can pass to the Conclusion. If, instead, the Custodes choose to proceed alongside Diomedes, it is time to take a look at the Valley of Death.

PART 4
THE VALLEY OF DEATH

In this part of the adventure, the group faces one of the most terrifying enemies of Dacia and Thracia, even darker and more devastating than ever. However, the Demiurge should feel free to interpret the story however they wish. If facing Vampire Attila and his Red Wolves guard is too much for the strength of the group, or the Demiurge has more interesting ideas for the conclusion of this adventure or their campaign, they can consider this content a guideline and alter anything they wish.

For example, the Red Wolves could be watching over the Mausoleum, but only in Attila's absence, who is now elsewhere. Or perhaps he is in, an old raider chief, but mortal nonetheless. Or he may simply be dead. Even this simple piece of information could be an efficient plot twist for the entire matter: the famous Lord of the Horde, Scourge of the Gods, eventually died, and the other Hun chieftains have kept their silence so as not to embolden their enemies. But now that his death is confirmed, and there is no valid successor, Rome could have a fighting chance at defeating the pillagers of the steppe! Alternatively, the Mausoleum could simply be a normal sepulcher for the characters to explore, with traps and minor enemies waiting for them, perhaps using the rules for Exploring a Labyrinth from the *Aegyptus* module.

If, instead, the Demiurge wants to raise the stakes, the Valley of Death is what they need to put on the scene a much greater threat. Attila, the Lord of Vampires, has been gathering a secret horde of pillagers and slaves to turn them into Vampires, Gelloi, and Reanimates, amassing legions upon legions of these horrid troops to launch his last assault on the Danuvian border fortresses, wielding the invincible Sword of War to usher in the Empire of Darkness the prophecies mentioned. Beside him, his dark lord Ordogus, Demon and Blood God, the real Black Caesar has risen from the abyss to reign over a world of chaos, death, and terror.

Assuming the Custodes do not stop him first, of course...

SCENE 10: THE RED WOLVES

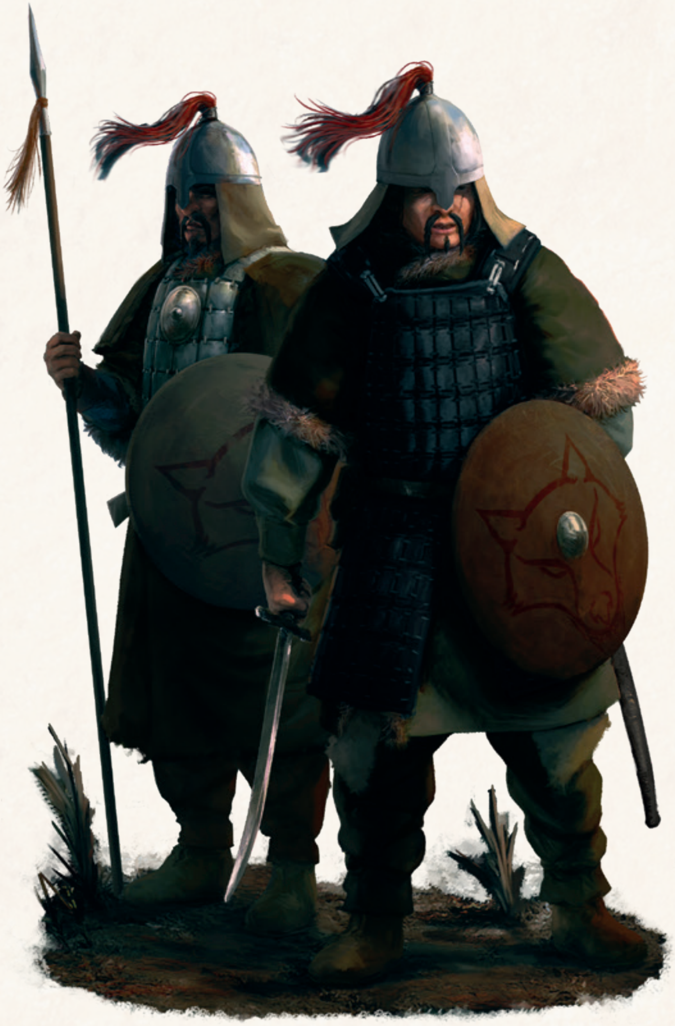
Part of the stories about this place is true: the Huns have gathered thousands of slaves to build the Mausoleum of Attila, to then butcher them or let them die of starvation. The narrow gorge snaking beyond the Tree of Lambs is dotted with bones and carcasses, torn by jackals, vultures, and crows. At the end of the steep canyon, in a small vale closed on all sides, is a rough and primitive building, stones stacked one onto the other. The structure is colossal, but its layout would send shivers down the spine of any engineer fresh out of the academy, or induce a Greek mason to take hemlock should he lay eyes upon it. Outside the Mausoleum there are four red wool tents, large and planted firmly into the ground, from which enter and leave the pillagers, **(1.5:1) Red Wolves**, the personal guard of Attila, probably sent here to watch over the treasure. The Red Wolves fight to the death if they spot intruders.

Red Wolves
Average Value: DV8
1 die: Ratio
2 dice: De Bello, De Corpore, Hit Points, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Natura
Hit Points: 16
Weapons: Serrated Sagaris (Damage 8), Spear (Damage 6), Toxon (Damage 8)
Protections: Lorica Squamata (Protection 4)

✣ *Special Abilities:* Pack Tactics

FIGHTING THE RED WOLVES

If the Custodes act stealthily, with cunning or surprise, they have time to use any resource or trick they can think of to fight the pillagers. Otherwise, these warriors charge into their opponents, in a tornado of screams and blows.



SCENE 11: THE SCOURGE OF THE GODS

Once the Custodes have made their way to the Valley of Death it is late afternoon, unless they were successful before noon. Otherwise, night should have just about fallen.

The inside of the tomb is lit by braziers burning fragrant essences, but they cannot dispel the chill and the smell of decay, or the wailing coming from underground. Inside is only one hall, covered in precious tapestries, enormous carpets, and piles of gold jewelry mixed with bones and mangled skulls. An onyx throne is on the other side, empty, while a black staircase descends into the darkness.

Under the hall is what could be the personal slaughterhouse of the Lord of the Horde, a prison of horror and massacre, where gold lies in piles amidst the blood, mangled bodies, and detritus. Even the chains of the torture implements are realized in the divine metal. It is here that Attila spends his time and feeds on his victims. It is impossible to surprise him… he was already waiting for the group. When he turns to face the Custodes, the truth becomes evident: Attila is a Vampire (see page 144)!

SCENE 12: THE ECSTASY OF GOLD

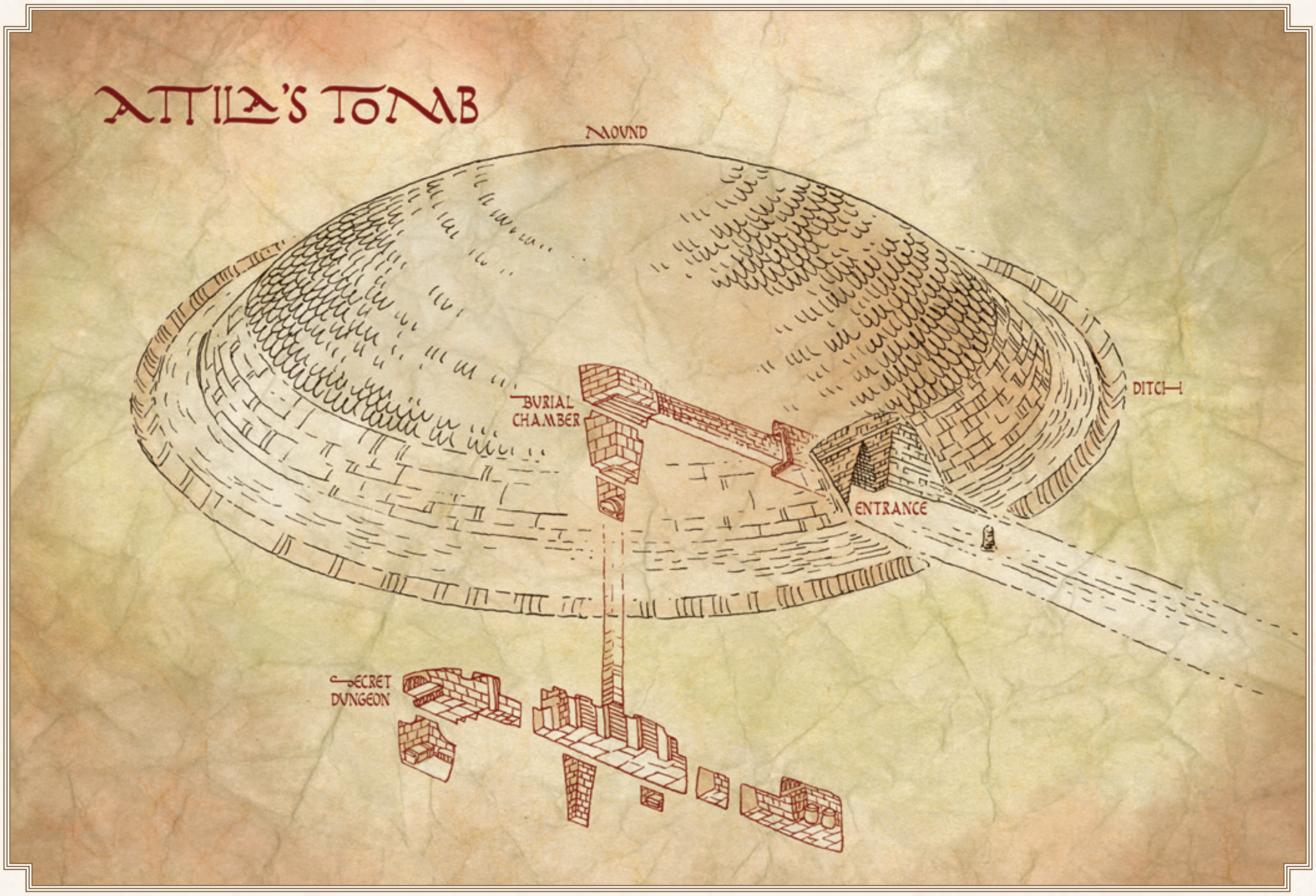
If the Custodes eventually defeat the Vampire Lord of the steppe, there is nothing left for them but destroying and sacking the Mausoleum. The gold gathered by the Huns is equal to that circulating in the whole Empire, not to mention the incredibly ancient, powerful, and beautiful artifacts. A jade dragon from the Far East, the Eye of the Moirae, the Spear of Selene, the Sword of War wielded by Attila, and who knows what else...

That gold, however, is cursed by the gods, still covered in the steaming blood of generations. Even Diomedes and his people, if still present, leave with a shake of the head, barely touching anything. *"We could never carry it all anyway..."* says the adventurer, shrugging his shoulders and moving to leave.

If the Custodes want, they can take one artifact each from among those they think are of divine origin, and they should be reconsecrated. It is up to the Demiurge to decide what they are. However, until the relic is brought to a Roman temple and reconsecrated, the Custodes are *Cursed*, and any prodigious powers of the items cannot be harnessed.

Then, Diomedes picks up a large golden mask of an elephant, cleans it, and brings it under the light. *"Wait a moment... this is the Mask of Ahiram... I can't believe it! They say the Phoenician scholar hid the secret of the Mines of King Solomon and the treasure of the Queen of Saba in it! Friends... we're back in the game!"*

Frea and Antarah, on the top of the stairs, look at each other and shake their heads.



CONCLUSION

After their return to Tomis, a bath at the thermae, a banquet, and a proper prayer at a proper shrine, finally this adventure is over. The intelligence and the acquaintance with Diomedes and Edico are useful pieces to plan their next operations against the Horde, earning the Custodes public praise. For all of the following season, they are busy sharing the news they have gathered and telling their tales.

To calculate the additional Experience Points for this adventure, use the following parameters:

- The Custodes have saved the victims of the specter from the macella of Heraclia, acting well and quickly: +1 Experience Point
- The Custodes have caught the Tomb Robbers in Histria and turned them in to the magistrates of Tomis: +1 Experience Point
- The Custodes have found a sound a solution to enter the expedition: +1 Experience Point
- The Custodes have studied and mapped the lands of Scythia to report back to Imperial command: +1 Experience Point
- The Custodes have defeated the Agnus Scythicus: +1 Experience Point
- The Custodes have found the access to the vale where the Tomb of Attila is located: +1 Experience Point
- The Custodes have defeated Attila: +4 Experience Points
- The Custodes have destroyed the Mausoleum and buried the cursed gold in that forgotten vale: +1 Experience Point
- The Custodes have brought the divine artifacts back to Thracia and had them reconsecrated: +1 Experience Point

At the end of winter, the day before the Custodes take the ship headed to their next mission, a thin and pale figure suddenly appears behind them, dressed in dark clothes and Avar trousers.

"Frea... we thought you were dead!" the group may say to her.

"I thought so, too, to be honest..." she answers, *"But this is not why I am here. Diomedes was captured by Theodoric, and is now locked in the prisons of Vassagonia. I need a hand to break him out. Are you up to the task?"*

Attila the Vampire
Value: DV10
1 die: Damage
2 dice: De Corpore, Hit Points, Ratio, Sensibilitas
3 dice: De Bello, De Natura
Hit Points: 20
Weapons: Sword of War (Damage 10*)
Protections: Lorica Squamata (Protection 4), Clipeus (Parry +2)

- *Special Abilities:* Grab, Stealthy
- *Magic Powers:* Blood Sucking (1DV), Fate Roll (only **De Bello** rolls; power granted by the Sword of War), Immortality, Metamorphosis, Terror (2DV, Attila must *stare* at his target), Unnatural Speed, Vampire Contagion, Vampiric Strength

** the Sword of War is an adamans weapon that grants to its wielder the Fate Roll magic power only for **De Bello** rolls. For additional information, see the sidebar on page 90.*

Mortally wounded years ago in battle, and saved by his Red Wolves, the only way he found to keep himself alive was the gift of the Blood God of their land, Ordogus the Black. When in the presence of the craziest, most powerful, and cruel of men, Ordogus did not hesitate to make him his spawn, planning to use him to bring Rome down and conquer the West. Today, the secret of the Lord of the Horde is known only by his most loyal followers, but he is planning to reveal himself to the world soon and begin his last ride against the Empire. Here, however, Attila is a few steps from a bunch of mortals who dare disturb his sanctuary, and the battle about to happen will be devastating!

FIGHTING ATTILA

If the Custodes have already eliminated the Red Wolves outside of the Mausoleum, Attila is alone against all, a fact that does not seem to worry him too much. He wields the Sword of War, his most powerful weapon. In the depths of his Mausoleum, lighting is scarce, increasing the difficulty of all ranged attacks by 1 level. If the Demiurge wants to, they can also employ the labyrinthine bowels of his dungeons to divide Attila's enemies and strike any time Custodes split from the group and wander alone (as per the magic power Illusion).

The advantages the Custodes might have, other than the strength of numbers and their allies from the expedition (if still alive), are special *teknès*, Indigitamenta, and artifacts they might have secured during their previous adventures, or simple sunlight. Bringing the fight outdoors, should it still be day, slows their terrible enemy down.

Another way to stop, wound, or slow Attila down is to bring his ramshackle Mausoleum crashing down on him. Even in this case, however, it would still be a temporary solution that should be paired with another.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN BYZANTIUM

PLAYER INTRODUCTION

The Magister of the *cursus legatorius*, **Valens**, the highest ranking officer in the Cohors Arcana for the region, has summoned the Custodes to Byzantium from their previous investigations, for a delicate matter. They have been chosen for their exceptional results during training and the successes in their previous missions, as well as their faces, mostly unknown in the Eastern Capital.

The Cohors Arcana needs trusted people, Custodes capable of investigating and acting in utter secrecy. Should the news of the terrifying danger lurking in the second city of the Empire, key redoubt in fighting the barbarians from the north, spread, panic would weaken all the defenses of the prefecture.

Because of this, none but their commander and his superiors must know they are investigating in the city. Once their mission has begun, they will have neither support nor protection, not even from their own colleagues. The characters will be completely on their own. Inside the city walls, the Custodes cannot openly carry their weapons, although they have a high-level permit that allows them to carry them concealed. They are not required to reveal the reasons of that permit, nor can the Vigiles can force them to.

Are you ready to face the dark threat hiding in the heart of the Empire, a catastrophe that not even the gods could foresee?

DEMIURGE INTRODUCTION

Some influential townspeople, probably tied to the cult of Hecate, have been found dead, their abdomens torn open as a brood of snakes slithered out. At first, investigators did not understand much, but the threat is relevant for sure, as even the gods of Rome have manifested their grim weariness for the matter, For this reason, Magister Valens has summoned the Custodes and tasked them with investigating these deaths.

What happened at the end of the Ludi of Hecate, with many of the followers of the goddess surviving (see sidebar), requires even greater secrecy than usual. The Custodes must work completely incognito and report their findings only to Valens, to avoid new leaks or warning their quarry.

Through Divination or investigating the crime scenes, the Custodes should sense the presence of a mysterious woman in the shadow, Zerynthia, and find one end of the bundle that leads them to a former gladiator in the Ludi of Hecate named Marcus Furius Vincens. To gain any answers from Furius, they must find him in the clandestine chariot races and beat him in a competition, or find some other way to force the information out of him. Furius then reveals he found lodging for this Zerynthia in an underground shelter and gives its location to the Custodes. Once there, the Custodes discover that Zerynthia is much more than they believed and learn part of her plan. She is none other than a priestess of Hecate, sent to eliminate all the witnesses and organizers of the Ludi and advance a mysterious scheme concerning the very fate of the Empire.

THE STORY SO FAR

The dark powers secretly controlling numerous regions of the province, the power plays between senators and aristocrats, and the hordes that press on the northern border are not the only issues of Moesia, Byzantium, and the Custodes who operate there. The Eastern Capital is, in fact, traditionally devout and dedicated to Hecate, Goddess of the Moon, Specters and Sorcery... a deity of the Official Cult that is tolerated and recognized, although hiding dark and dire secrets.

Sometime before, the Custodes had come into contact with the Ludi of Hecate, a ritualistic event tied to the Threefold Goddess held in secret below the city, with hunting, fights, and bloody battles right in the heart of Byzantium, employing even mystical drugs, monsters, and champions from other provinces.

After some investigating, the Cohors Arcana turned in numerous powerful people in the city, but the matter was soon covered up, and many followers of the goddess from every corner of the Empire silently returned to their lands of origin. The Byzantine authorities then publicly declared that all those behind the Ludi were found and punished, a claim that the centurions of the Cohors do not believe to be true.

In the meantime, during a parallel investigation into the Sons of Caligula, some Custodes came into contact with the Vilii twins. Aulus Vilius Victor and Publius Vilius Fortunatus are famous chariot owners at the Abido Hippodrome, as well as secretly members of the Covenant of Spartacus, an alliance of gladiators, charioteers, and other athletes and arena fighters who fight against the oppression of their servile condition.

In defeating Zerynthia, the Cohors Arcana takes the first step on the road to this dark secret.

This adventure is connected to the events in *To Live and Let Die in Byzantium* and a few of the characters introduced in *The Sons of Caligula*, both of which scenarios were published in *Mysteries of the Empire, Volume I*. To better understand this premise, for both those who did not play those adventures and those who did but to different conclusions, it is recommended to read the sidebar The Story So Far, summarizing what should have happened before the beginning of this one. This is, also, a possible introduction to the upcoming campaign *The Missing Prophecy,* which pits the Custodes against a unique and secret enemy, the Magna Mater Tenebrarum, merely hinted at in this adventure.

Adventure Average Value: 6 EP

SYNOPSIS

This mission is set in Byzantium. It is divided into three parts.

PART 1: PROPHECIES AND MYSTERIES

The Custodes must investigate a series of gruesome, supernatural murders.

PART 2: FAUSTUS AND FURIUS

The investigation leads the Custodes to the great central market, and then to the Hippodrome, where they must pose as chariot racers to gain clues to the identity of the murderer.

PART 3: THE LADY OF SNAKES

The Custodes must face a murderous avatar of Hecate in a final confrontation.

PART 1

PROPHECIES AND MYSTERIES

Four among the most powerful men in Byzantium have been found dead in the previous weeks: an aristocrat, a general, a palace advisor, and a priest of Hecate, all killed in the same horrible manner. They were poisoned by a hundred snakes, which devoured their innards and destroyed their organs. All of the murders happened at night, when the victims were in their homes or elsewise alone. Only the wealthy landowner was in the company of his wife, who was also killed, but spared the desecration of her corpse. The priest, the last to die, was killed in a chamber locked from the inside. Whenever possible, the snakes slithered away after the murder, biting, without killing, only to clear their path, headed for the sewers, where their trails were lost. Magister Valens explains that nobody must know what is happening in the heart of Byzantium. Because of this, the Custodes must do nothing that could tie them to the Cohors Arcana, although the organization will provide them with some equipment and money for their expenses. As soon as they find information, they are to contact Magister Valens personally.

Before leaving the barracks, the Custodes are authorized to perform one Divination from the following list, if interested, or draw Sortes for personal omens. The Difficulty of any Divination ritual performed on this occasion is reduced by one level:

- **Favor of the Gods (DT 3).** The gods of Rome are favorable to the mission and bless the Custodes. With II or III Degree of Success, the Custodes sense the gods seem worried by the events and that secret forces work to undermine Imperial power.
- **Clairvoyance (DT 6).** Present events are covered by a pall of darkness, as a dark power has shrouded them from the eyes of the augurs. They see neither snakes nor anything similar, but should the Custodes focus on the murderer, they sense a woman tussling with a tall and strongly built man, somewhere in the humid underground of the city. The strange woman has a serpent-shaped armband of black iron on her left arm, while the man shows gladiator wounds and the mark of a freed slave. With II or III Degree of Success, they identify the man as Marcus Furius Vincens.
- **Precognition (DT 9).** The Custodes see themselves riding on a chariot, at night, in a chase of sorts. The chariot in front of them throws a log in front of their horses, who neigh in panic. With II or III Degree of Success, they can identify its charioteer as Marcus Furius Vincens.
- **Retrocognition (DT 6).** Present events are covered by a pall of darkness, as a dark power has shrouded them from the eyes of the augurs. Seeing what happened in the rooms of the victims the night of their murders is impossible. However, the Custodes sense a woman wandering a vast covered market, somehow connected to the deaths. The woman passes close four times to servants or women busy making their purchases, casually knocking their bags or baskets. With II or III Degree of Success, it is possible to notice a serpent-shaped, black iron armband on her left arm. After a few moments, the iron serpents at her wrist seem to animate and breathe a dark shadow inside the bags, dissolving but an instant later. It is not clear whether this is something real or symbolic.

RIGHT AT THAT MOMENT...

When the ritual ends, something terrifying happens in the shrine; lights suddenly dim and a pall of darkness falls on it:

- Each Custos must make **Coordinatio** or **Sensibilitas** roll (DT 9) to avoid being enveloped by the shadow. Those who fail suffer the *Suffocation* condition (see Core Rulebook) for 3 tempus, at the end of which those who passed can attempt to banish the shadow by reciting proper invocations (**De Magia**, DT 9).
- At the beginning of the fourth tempus (or if the Custodes have all passed the **De Magia** roll) divine rule is restored, and the shadow dissolves with a shriek. Such a terrifying attack shows the power of this threat, capable of striking even in the inner shrine of the Cohors Arcana. It is time for the Custodes to begin their investigation!

SCENE 1: THE CALIDARIUM ENIGMA

While the previous victims were buried with full rites, and there is not much to find in their homes, the priest of Hecate was killed the night before the convocation and his body left on site, for the Custodes to examine it.

Marcus Ulpius Leurus was taking a steam bath in the calidarium of his domus when he was attacked by a whole brood of snakes that nobody saw enter, but many saw leave.

A visit to the "crime scene" and a proper Investigation (DT 6, 6 successes required) leads to one of the following pieces of information per success:

- The man has a blackened mass of rotting flesh in place of his abdomen, bearing a hundred bite marks. Similar marks are on his arms, hands, and legs, and his body is soaked in poison. This is something strange and horrid, as his body appears swollen and tender, his bones dissolved.
- The priest was spending his night at the calidarium, after returning home in the afternoon. Nothing of note was reported other than he asked to be left alone and had locked the door from the inside out of fear, telling his servants to find any snake or other reptile hiding in the domus. In the previous days, he had looked nervous and worried to his wife, but he had not talked about it. Those ablutions were his way to relax. He was a healthy middle-aged man. Nobody ever found reptiles indoors, either before or after, so it looked an extraordinary and dark omen to see a swarm of small snakes slithering from the calidarium after the death of the *pater familias*, when the door to the room was opened.
- He is bloated with poison and has lost much blood, but there is something else mysterious and monstrous. On a successful **De Magia** roll (DT 9), the characters realize the snakes that came out of Ulpius' body are terrifying and legendary creatures, the **Sepses**, minuscule serpents born of the hair of Medusa after her death, as they cause similar damage to the bodies of their victims.
- Custodes in tune with the supernatural world might notice around the house and on the inner door of the calidarium strange small amulets, that seem to resonate with some magical power. They are in the shape of a bow with a nocked arrow. Asking his relatives and servants, the group discovers it was the victim himself that hung those charms around the house a few days before. On a successful **De Magia** roll (DT 9), the characters remember these amulets are very effective against reptiles, a small acronym and their make pointing to an old Scythian witch who lives in the city, Sycorax.
- The snakes that left the domus can be tracked following the trail of grass they withered with their mere passage. On a successful **De Natura** roll (DT 6), the Custodes are able to track them until they find one of the snakes crushed under the wheel of a cart, on the edge of the road. On a successful **De Magia** roll (DT 6), they realize it is one of the legendary Sepses. The corpse of the animal writhes in front of the Custos and disappears in a coil of shadow and smoke.
- Only after they have found out about the Sepses do the Custodes realize that these unnatural snakes do not simply consume the corpses with their poison, but are born of their tissues. Somehow, a curse generates them from the flesh of the targets, they grow in their bodies, find a way out of their abdomens, and scatter, looking to return from whence they came.

RIGHT AT THAT MOMENT...

When the Custodes are ready to leave the domus of the dead priest, one of them has a sharp pain in their stomach. The victim should be the one who has suffered the most amount of damage during the previous scene, one of the Custodes who participated to the Ludi of Hecate (see sidebar on page 146), or one chosen by the Demiurge. It could even be more than one victim, each one bearing a darkened bite mark on their abdomen.

The victims are doomed. How much time they have before ending up like the other victims of Zerynthia is unknown. The only thing they do know is that if the group does not find the source of the curse soon, they will be next...

SCENE 2: THINGS TO DO IN BYZANTIUM WHEN YOU ARE DEAD

At this point, the Demiurge should leave room for the players to follow whatever trail they can think of, ensuring that everything eventually points them to the central market of Byzantium. It was there that Zerynthia accosted the servants buying food for the households of the victims and cursed them, although she inflicted the horrid fate only on the followers of Hecate rather than the whole *familias*.

The following are some investigation and evidence examples:

- **The serpent trail.** If the Custodes have already found one of the Sepses (see previous Scene), they can roll **De Natura** (DT 9) again to keep following their trail. On success, the Custodes piece the movements of the Sepses together and reach a great market, where the trail ends (the serpents travel only at night to the market, to join Zerynthia).
- **The divination trail.** The market, the woman, Furius, everything leads to the grand central market- the one of the vision.
- **Finding Sycorax.** The old witch lives outside of the *Murum Theodosii*. She immediately understands who the Custodes are and is willing to cooperate, as long as they tell her the truth. She explains her amulets are effective against the magic of the snakes and that the priest had come to her some days before, scared of something. Why a follower of Hecate was so scared of snakes as to resort to the power of Bendis Kothys, the queen of Scythian witches, she does not know. If convinced to talk about Zerynthia, she says the enemy the Custodes must deal with is no simple witch, but an immensely powerful being... then, she refuses to add anything else. If the Custodes attack or threaten the old woman, she spits at them and curses them, inflicting them the *Cursed* condition on a failed **Ratio** roll (DT 12).
- **Finding an informant or combing the underground.** This involves a series of **De Societate** rolls, and perhaps a few chases (**De Corpore**) or beatings (**De Bello**). Bribing and greasing the cogs work, too, but the Demiurge should not make life too easy for the Custodes.

If the players do not come up with any of the above, or fail at any, a black lightning bolt manifests in plain day, visible only to a few, and even harder to interpret. On a successful *Omen* ritual, the Custodes realize that the lightning bolt was shaped like a serpent and appeared right above the central market, a sign of the gods that should not be ignored.

RIGHT IN THAT MOMENT...

Zerynthia has been following the Custodes since the night of their summoning by Magister Valens. Now that she has seen them on her trail, she has decided to act, paying some cutthroats to take them out of the picture. They are average Byzantine scum, who attempt to draw the group into an *insula* to ambush them. Use the profile for **Brigands (1.5:1)** from the Core Rulebook.

If captured, the cutthroats reveal they were hired by a woman at the market and are capable of describing her. However, the money she gave them turns into venomous snakes under the eyes of the Custodes, killing the hired blades almost immediately, and then turning into coils of smoke.

PART 2

FAUSTUS AND FURIUS

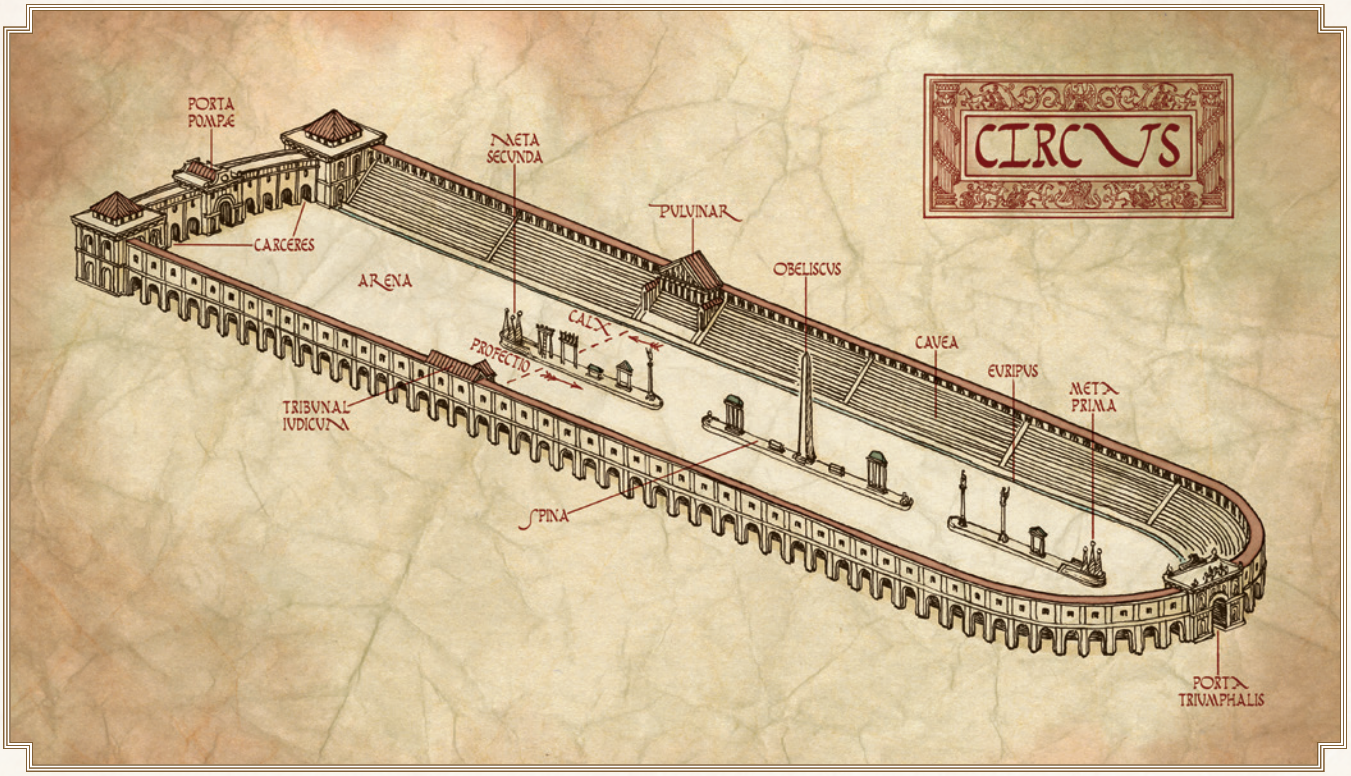
All trails lead to the great central market, one of the most important covered markets in the city, often attended by Zerynthia, and where she cursed the food of the victims. Asking around about her or the snakes, the Custodes need to resort to any of the previously mentioned methods.

At this point, those they ask mention a mysterious woman from the Aegean or southern Thracia who immediately seemed odd and suspicious to whoever saw her. Everybody whispers she is a witch, and one person even knows her name: Zerynthia. Nobody knows where she lives, but loose tongues warn the Custodes that the witch found lodging in the city thanks to a known member of the local underworld, Marcus Furius Vincens, who protects and hides her. If the Custodes want to know more, they must address him. Furius can be found in the alleys of the docks or among the Blues, always in shady company.

Marcus Furius Vincens is a muscular and large man, of servile origin, but as smart and cunning as a panther. He is one of the current racing champions for the Blues at the Hippodrome. His head is clean-shaven, and he bears numerous scars and marks from prisons and the arena. He is also, more or less secretly, a member of the Covenant of Spartacus (see page 67).

A few years back, Furius became a free man and a champion in the chariot races at the Hippodrome. As well as racing in regular competitions, Furius manages gambling, fights, and secondary races.

If the Custodes befriend the Blues or are in contact with the Vilii twins or the Covenant, tracking Furius is simple. Otherwise, they



can attempt numerous ploys to find him, including bets, disguises, brawls, and other tricks, although, once found, the only way to convince him to reveal anything about Zerynthia is to defeat him in one of the upcoming chariot races at the Hippodrome. He knows what happened recently with the Ludi of Hecate and is involved in the matter (the Custodes who have played *To Live and Let Die in Byzantium* might recognize him and remember he has on his back the mark of the Trigla fish), so he does not like talking with anybody... especially somebody who smells like Cohors Arcana a mile away! The only way to convince him is to challenge him to a bet on the next race.

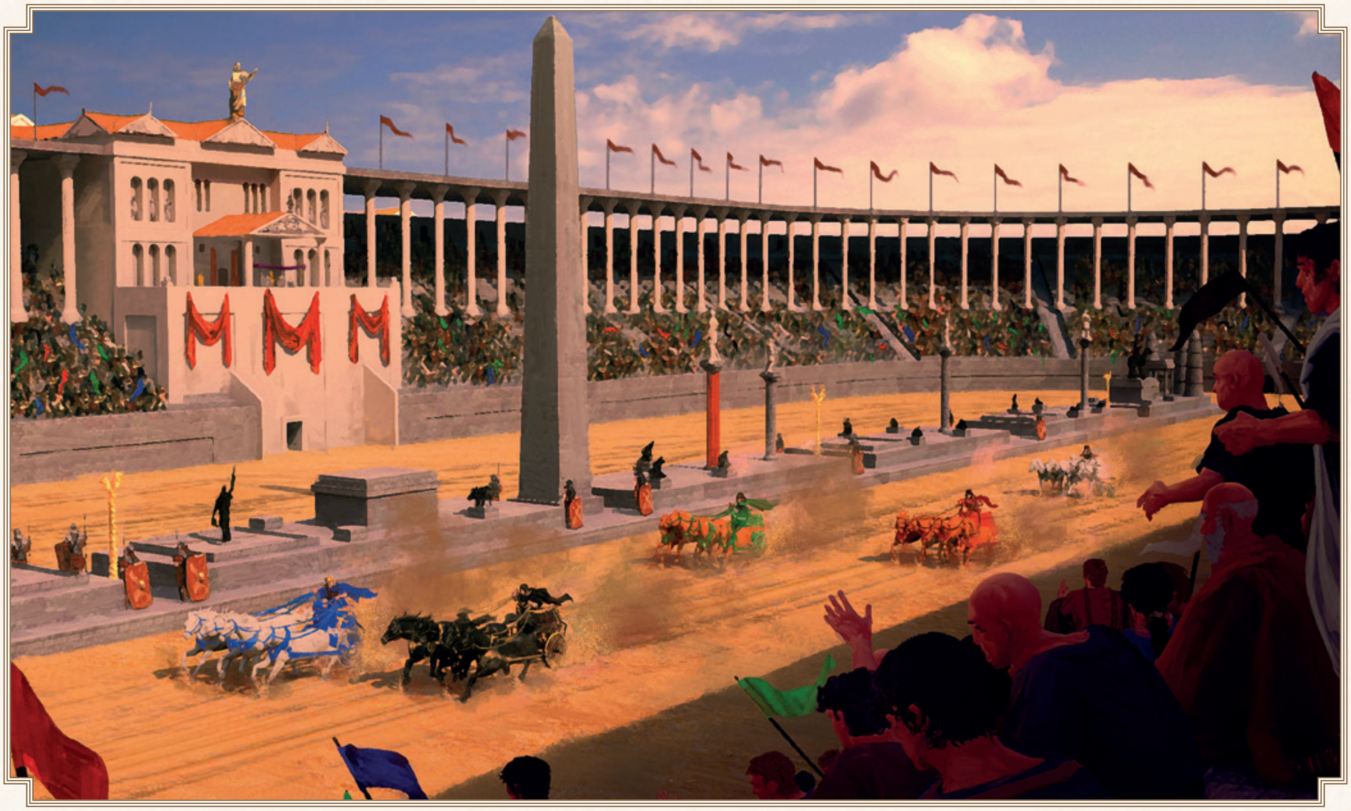
To participate, the Custodes need to "convince" one of the four factions to entrust a chariot to them (Kidnap the charioteers? Sabotage? Charm? Blackmail? Anything goes in the Eastern Capital!). Once they have it, one of the Custodes must race, passing as the previous charioteer, named "Faustus".

Suggestions. The Vilii or other Covenant contacts can provide a connection to the Greens. If the Custodes have friends in the army they can ask a favor of, or wish to ask the Cohors Arcana for help, somebody can find them a contact in the Reds. If the Custodes have ingratiated themselves to the Christians or Goths in the city, they can obtain a spot as a charioteer for the Whites or Blacks, respectively.

SCENE 3: THE RACE

The race they are about to compete in for information on Zerynthia is not an official race of the Hippodrome, but one of the numerous practice matches and qualifiers held before the main competitions. To participate and win, the players must choose a Custos to impersonate "Faustus" and pilot one of the chariots. There are ten racers, two per faction, including "Faustus" and Furius, and the race is made up of 8 laps. At every lap, "Faustus" must roll.

- **First Lap.** All the chariots lurch forward in a bid to achieve a good position without being trampled. The Custos must roll **Coordinatio** or **De Natura** (DT 6). On a success, "Faustus" is sixth (fifth with a II Degree of Success, or fourth with a III Degree of Success). On a failure, he is last. In the meantime, three of the ten chariots have accidents or issues at the start and leave the competition. Among them, that of the other charioteer running for "Faustus"' faction.
- **Second Lap.** Some chariots ahead of "Faustus"' keep ramming each other, among them, two opponents embittered by old rivalries. If they wish, the Custos can make a **Ingenium** roll (DT 6) to understand who they are and take advantage of that. On a success, they are successful in maneuvering the opponents close to one another: with a I Degree of Success, one crashes and leaves the race, earning "Faustus" a position; with a II or III Degree



of Success, both competitors crash, and the Custos earns two positions. On a failure, the Custos loses a position.

- **Third Lap.** An opportunity presents itself to gain ground! The Custos rolls **De Natura** (DT 6) to achieve a better position. With a I Degree of Success they keep their position, with a II Degree of Success they gain one position, with a III Degree of Success they gain two, and on a failure they lose one position, if not already last.
- **Fourth Lap.** A chariot driver in front of "Faustus"' throws a log behind them. The Custos must roll **Coordinatio** (DT 6) to avoid it. If the Custodes saw this in the premonition from Scene 1, the test is automatically passed. On a success, "Faustus" dodges the log. With a II or III Degree of Success, the log hits the chariot behind "Faustus"' (if any) and disqualifies it. On a failure, the Custos' chariot is struck squarely and loses a position.
- **Fifth Lap.** It is time to gain ground! The Custos rolls **De Natura** (DT 6) to achieve the best position. With a I Degree of Success they keep their position, with a II Degree of Success they gain one position, with a III Degree of Success they gain two, and on a failure they lose one position (if possible).
- **Sixth Lap.** The track is now somewhat familiar, and "Faustus" could press his advantage. If the Custos wishes, they can roll **Ingenium** (DT 6) to gain ground. On a success, they gain one position for each Degree of Success. On a failure, they lose one position, if not already last.
- **Seventh Lap.** It is time to gain ground! The Custos rolls **De Natura** (DT 6) to achieve the best position. With a I Degree of Success they keep their position, with a II Degree of Success they gain one position, with a III Degree of Success they gain two, and on a failure they lose one position (if possible). In the meantime, one of the chariots ahead crashes and is destroyed, moving "Faustus" up another position.
- **Eighth Lap.** It is now or never. There is no room for tricks and cheats, only pushing the horses to their limit and trying to crash Furius and the other charioteers out of the race. The Custos rolls **De Bello**, **De Corpore**, or **De Natura** (DT 3 if they are first, increasing the difficulty by 1 level for each position after first). On a success, they beat Furius at the last moment and win the race. If they fail, they suffer an aggressive ramming maneuver from Furius, crashing their chariot, which inflicts 4d6 points of damage on them (roll **De Corpore**, DT 6 to halve).

At the end of the race, if the Custos won, they are offered a drink and a private chat with Furius. Otherwise, Furius is all the same impressed by "Faustus"' bravery, but requires an **Auctoritas** or **De Societate** roll (DT 6) to be approached.

In such case, Furius finally tells what he knows of that strange woman everybody seems to be looking for. Zerynthia is a witch from Samothrace, who arrived in the city with much silver and asked for a place to stay that was close to the market and had an underground escape route. Furius gives the location of the building (the same *insula* in which the group was ambushed by cutthroats!) and leaves.

PART 3
THE LADY OF SNAKES

Back at the insula, the Custodes discover that the dwelling of Zerynthia is barren and abandoned, furnished only with a sleeping roll, a few baskets with everyday items, and a brazier burning aromatic herbs. However, on a **Sensibilitas** roll (DT 6) or a careful search (**De Scientia**, DT 9), they notice a hidden passage that leads underground. It is a "shadow door"; if the room is plunged into pitch darkness, that wall disappears and can be moved through!
The passage leads into the darkness of a dungeon of sorts.

Note. *This is an occasion for the Demiurge to place perils of their choice, such as crumbling masonry, mazes of pipes and sewers, snake attacks, or even an enormous, mutated albino crocodile, the corrupt spawn of exotic animals brought to Byzantium for the arena or the fun of the patricians. When done with this section, move to the final confrontation.*

After a few passages and a staircase, the group arrives at a hidden temple, a chamber with a life-size statue of Hecate, portrayed as the Lady of Snakes, covered in reptiles, braziers, and a blood-stained altar. As soon as the Custodes are inside, Zerynthia appears behind them and prepares to fight. Her visage shifts into a terrifying mask, her eyes become those of a snake, her nails green and dripping with poison.
Zerynthia is not a simple witch, but a true incarnation of the Lady of Snakes or a priestess possessed by Hecate herself. Although she is an extremely powerful being, her mortal form can be defeated. Before or after the battle, if asked, she will explain why she has been killing the members of her own cult in the city:

"Those fools put our plans at risk with their plots and schemes. But the power of men is nothing, compared to what shall come. The rotten fruit of your Empire is about to fall. Your augurs preserved it beyond its due, an unnatural and unholy blasphemy that cannot be allowed to continue. The world, which should have moved on, remained immobile and stagnant, an Aegyptian mummy, whose flesh should have fed snakes, rats, and crows. This magically preserved corpse, this illusion of eternity, has dragged on for too long. From inside its rotting heart, the Great Gods are ready to strike, casting down the dying gods of the Empire, and the Magna Mater Tenebrarum is about to rise. You Cohors Arcana lapdogs, as well those Vestali children, will be the first to fall...

SCENE 4: THE FIGHT WITH ZERYNTHIA

During the fight against Zerynthia, broods of snakes fall onto the Custodes, while the witch attacks them with her poisoned claws.

Zerynthia
Degree of Danger: 2
Size: 3
Value: DV8
1 die: Damage
2 dice: De Bello, De Corpore, Hit Points, Ratio
3 dice: De Magia, Sensibilitas
Hit Points: 16

- *Special Abilities:* Grab, Poison* (2DV), Stealthy
- *Magic Powers:* Fate Roll, Paralysis (1DV, Zerynthia must *stare* at her victim)

The Poison of Zerynthia, in addition to the normal effects, causes Paralysis (see the effects of the same magic power; the roll of the potency of the Poison against the **Vigor of the victim determines the effects of Paralysis in addition to damage).*

Rain of Snakes. At the beginning of each tempus, each Custos must roll **De Bello** or **De Corpore** (DT 6) to avoid suffering 1d3 points of damage (ignoring armor). Regardless of the results of the roll, the snakes prevent the Custodes from benefiting from numerical superiority against Zerynthia.

Charms of Sycorax. Those who wear one of those charms add +3 to **Vigor** rolls against the Poison of Zerynthia or her snakes.

Final sentence. If one of the Custodes with the Mark of the Snakes from Scene 1 is defeated or *Poisoned* by Zerynthia for more than 3 tempus, their stomach explodes in a shower of snakes, inflicting on them 10d6 points of damage (ignoring armor) and forcing the others to roll against the *Rain of Snakes* (see above).

If the Custodes defeat Zerynthia, she crumples to the ground. After taking a mortal wound, however, Zerynthia does not die...

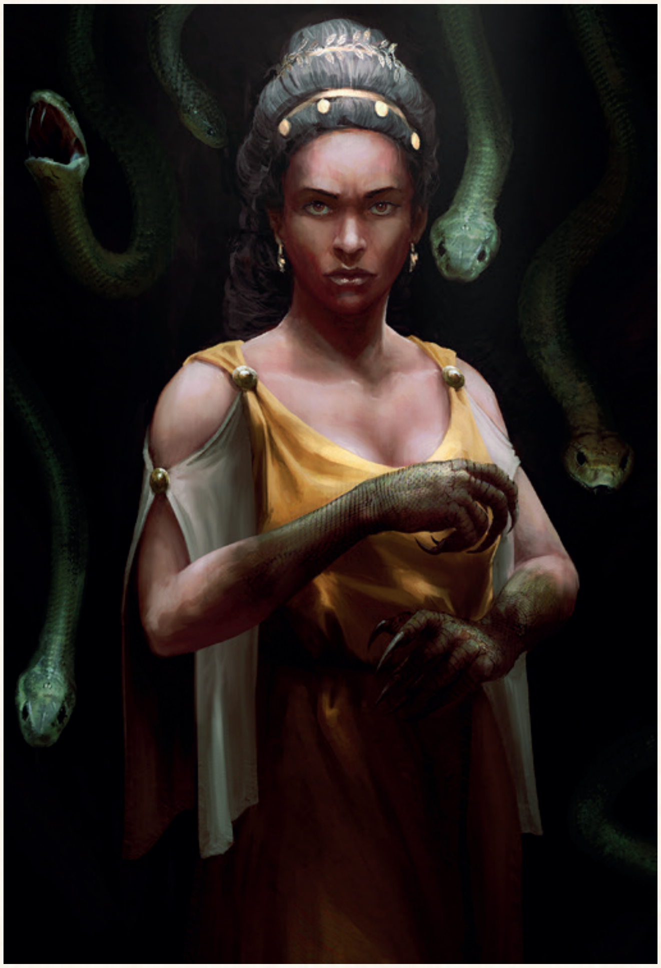
All the snakes enter her mouth, and in front of the horrified Custodes a terrible transformation happens: Zerynthia turns into an ancestral, monstrous form, a colossal snake from her waist down and a horrid, hairless hybrid on top, at least ten steps from the ground. Ready for the final challenge?

Zerynthia, Lady of Snakes
Degree of Danger: 4
Size: 3
Value: DV12
1 die: Damage
2 dice: De Bello, De Corpore, De Magia, Hit Points, Sensibilitas
3 dice: -
Hit Points: 24
Protections: Scaly skin (Protection 4)

- *Special Abilities:* Grab, Poison, (2DV)
- *Magic Powers:* Fate Roll, Paralysis (1DV, Zerynthia must *stare* at her victim)

The Poison of Zerynthia, in addition to the normal effects, causes Paralysis (see the effects of the same magic power; the roll of the potency of the Poison against the* ***Vigor* *of the victim determines the effects of Paralysis in addition to damage).*

Note. *In this phase of the fight, the Rain of Snakes effect is no longer active.*



FINAL SENTENCE

If one of the Custodes with the Mark of the Snakes from Scene 1 is defeated or *Poisoned* by Zerynthia for more than 3 tempus, their stomach explodes in a shower of snakes, inflicting on them 10d6 points of damage (ignoring armor) and forcing the others to roll against the *Rain of Snakes.* The snakes then merge with the body of Zerynthia, healing any Hit Points she may have lost.

CONCLUSION

Before dying, as her shrine crumbles on itself in ruin, Zerynthia manages to let out one final, inhuman scream:

"Fools! You have found but the Point of the Needle, but for you the time has come! TREMBLE, SERVANTS OF THE EMPIRE! THE MAGNA MATER TENEBRARUM AND THE GREAT GODS ARE COMING, AND THEIR DARK RISE SHALL NOT BE FORESEEN..."

Escaping the collapse of the shrine, the surviving Custodes make their way to the surface without further encounters. If there are any survivors with the Mark of the Snake, it disappears without a trace. Now they must only report their findings to the Cohors and wait for the next developments of this dark prophecy...

To reward additional experience points, apply the following:

- The Custodes received one or more amulets from Sycorax: +1 Experience Point.
- The Custodes won the chariot race: +1 Experience Point.
- The Custodes defeated Zerynthia without suffering losses: +2 Experience Point.

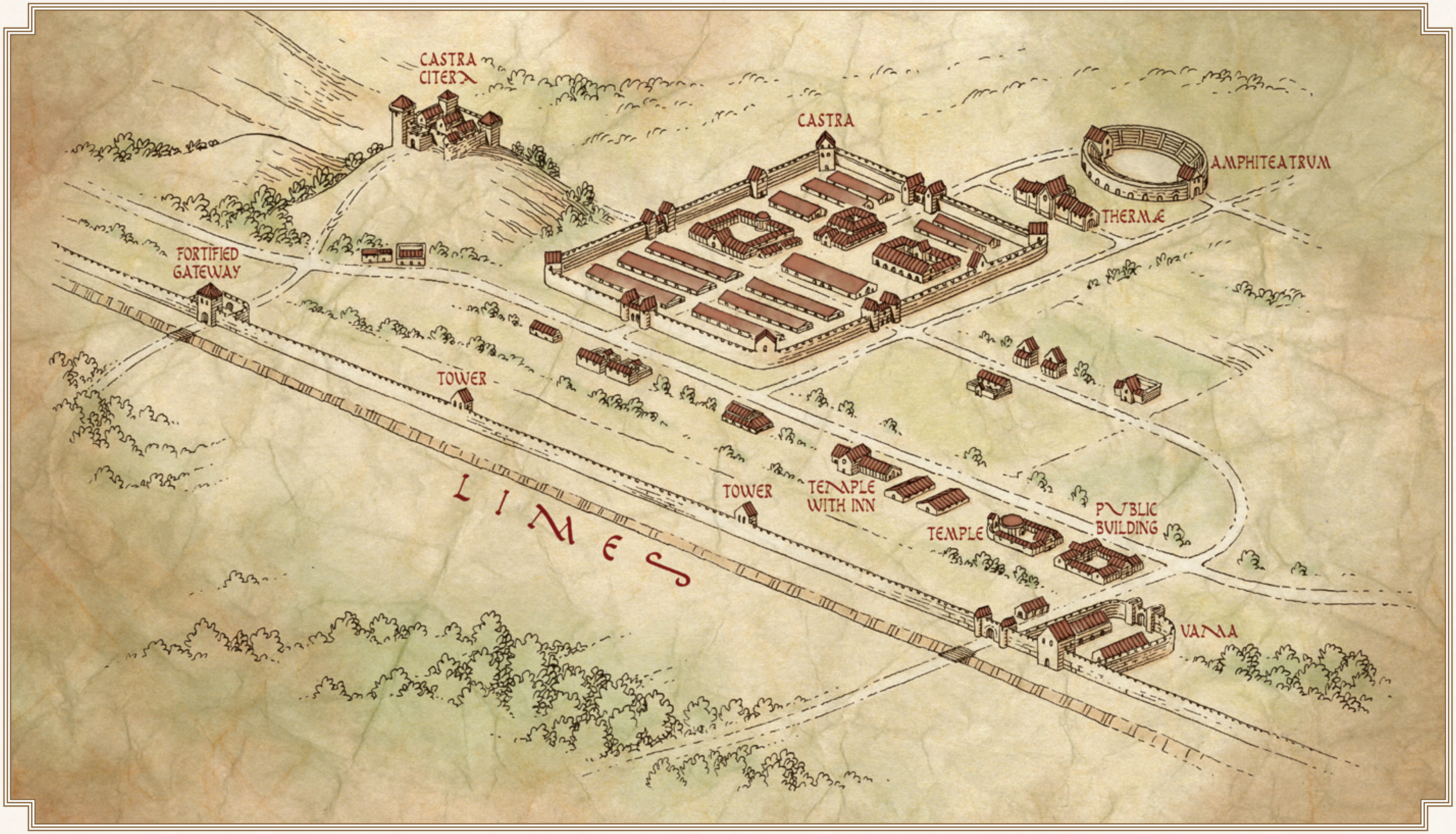
BACKERS

A. Bracaglia
Aaron Schneider
Abel Garcia
Adam Longley
Adam M Coleman
Adenfin
Adrián Carrizo Pérez
Agostino Mayer
Aidan Stevens
Alan Buchanan
Alan Croot
Alan Greve
Alan Massari
Alberto “Zio Hal” Cabra
Alberto Bianchi
Alberto Carpena
Alberto Ferraresi
Alberto Gangarossa
Alberto Girardi
Alberto Tenaglia
Alberto Vitali
Alec Burt
Alena Dvorackov
Alessandro Babbi
Alessandro Bernardini
Alessandro Brugnolo
Alessandro Di Pastena
Alessandro Favarotto
Alessandro Fietta
Alessandro Gaspardini
Alessandro Giacometti
Alessandro Marcellini
Alessandro Marchesini
Alessandro Morandafrasca
Alessandro Noseda
Alessandro Pelizzon
Alessandro Soro
Alessandro Valentini
Alessandro Varesi
Alessia Sagnotti
Alessio Maceroli
Alexander Neumann
Alexander Vandenhoven
Alfes Thompson
Anders Håkon Gaut
Andrea Bartoli
Andrea Bonilauri
Andrea Cazzulo
Andrea Cioffarelli
Andrea Coletta
Andrea Compagno
Andrea Galbiati
Andrea Garello
Andrea Gatto
Andrea Gauna
Andrea Giovanelli
Andrea Magliarditi
Andrea Sire Marengo
Andrea Marri
Andrea Massacesi
Andrea Micozzi
Andrea Pavan
Andrea Ranieri
Andrea Riela
Andreas Blank
Andreas Bobzin
Andreas Schrapel
Andrew Cole
Andrew Davies
Andrew Hall
Andrew J. Beal
Andrew Longuevan
Andrew Sangar
Andrew White
Angelo Eramo
Angelo Fortuna
Angus Abranson
Anthony Fontanetta
Antonio “Sigysmondo” Pirrello
Antonio Ledi
Antonio Micolucci
Antonio Miguel Martorell Ferriol
Antonio Ruberto
Antonio Veronese
Antony Gravili
Arash Sanari
Ares Games
Arik Aslanyan
Áron Péterfy
Austin Fenwick
Baiocchi Francesco
Balostro Stefano
Baracchi Federico
Barry Johnston
Bart Gelens
Bartolomeo Stellato
Ben Hollas
Benjamin Fabian
Bergonzini Francesco
Bernd Meyer
Bert Jennings
Bev Nelson
Bíró Ádám
Blake McCormack
Bo
Bob de Lange
Brain O. Hicks
Brendan Zinn
Brennan Phillips
Brent Kofoed
Brian Hoffman
Brian Koonce
Brice Tarbox
Briceson Tollison
Brook Freeman
Bruno Sebire
Bryan Flavelle
Bryant Turnage
Bulcsú Benedek
C.F. Upton
Cabra Alberto
Caitlin Colby
Camille Haller
Cara Römelt
Carl Hickman
Carlo De Luca
Carlo Giannelli
Carlo Snider
Carlo Tietz
Carlos H. Benitez
Carmelo Vaccarello
CBK Gaming
Celio Ambrosi-Santamaria
Cellot Ermes
Charles Phillips
Chase Street2
Chris Burris
Chris Dietrich
Chris E.
Chris Edwards5
Chris Gardiner
Chris Hladik
Chris Hutchinson
Chris Jessee
Christian Loew
Christian Toftdahl
Christian Varini
Christine Loew
Christoffer Noren Carlsson
Christoph Kaleschke
Christopher Detlef
Christopher Giesy
Christopher Gunning
Christopher S Moore
Christopher W Franklin
Ciro Alessandro Sacco
Claudia Borri
Claudio Anelli
Claudio Antonio Forgione
Claudio Savoia
Claudio Vergati
Clement & Myriam Jauvion
Clive Henrick
Colin “Mephit James” Wilson
Comandante Paz
Conan McKegg
Connor James Dickson
Conor S.
Corey Fisher
Corrado Schiavetto
Corso Tiziana
Cortesi Massimo
Craig S.
Crane Laws
Cristian Comolli
Cristian Pierandrei
Crozier Maxime
Dabo Davide Bortolo
Dan Quattrone
Daniel Cohen
Daniel Maurerjmkk
Daniel Sencabaugh
Daniel Sundin
Daniele Bellantoni
Daniele Carosi
Daniele De Bortoli
Daniele Gabriele
Daniele Mancosu
Daniele Priore
Daniele Provinciali
Daniele Toffanin
Danilo Moretti
Danilo Nocera
David B. Semmes
David Burnett
David Castle
David Duerschlag
David Fiorini
David Fruscoloni
David Goncalves
David Gori
David Martin
David Moretti
David Resetti
David Stenbeck
Davide Bellani
Davide Beretta
Davide Lammardo
Davide Marescotti
Davide Ordigoni
Davide Siebezzi
Davide Ventura
Demetrio Leoni
Derek Chapman
Derek Dubery
Giacomelli Alessio
Diego Descalzo
Dietmar Böhmer
Dirk Vanleeuw
DMR Grimes
Domenico Antonio Mangialardi
Domenico Colucci
Domenico Lavorato
Dominic Hladek
Dominik Oshowski
Dominique Delhaye
Donato Giardini
Douglas J. Fisher
Edoardo Maria Mollica
Edoardo Volpin
Edouard Carletti
EdSylCaRu
Eduardo Jaenes Saenz
Eis Annavini
Eleanor McHugh
ELF Vesala
Elia Santi
Emanuele Di Pietro
Emanuele Dominiqu Cappella
Emanuele Minelli
Emanuele Quarello
Emanuele Tresoldi
EmeraldRogue
Emiliano Marchetti
Emilio Desalvo
Emilio Schettino
Emmanuele Troiano
Enrico Amadei
Enrico Farne

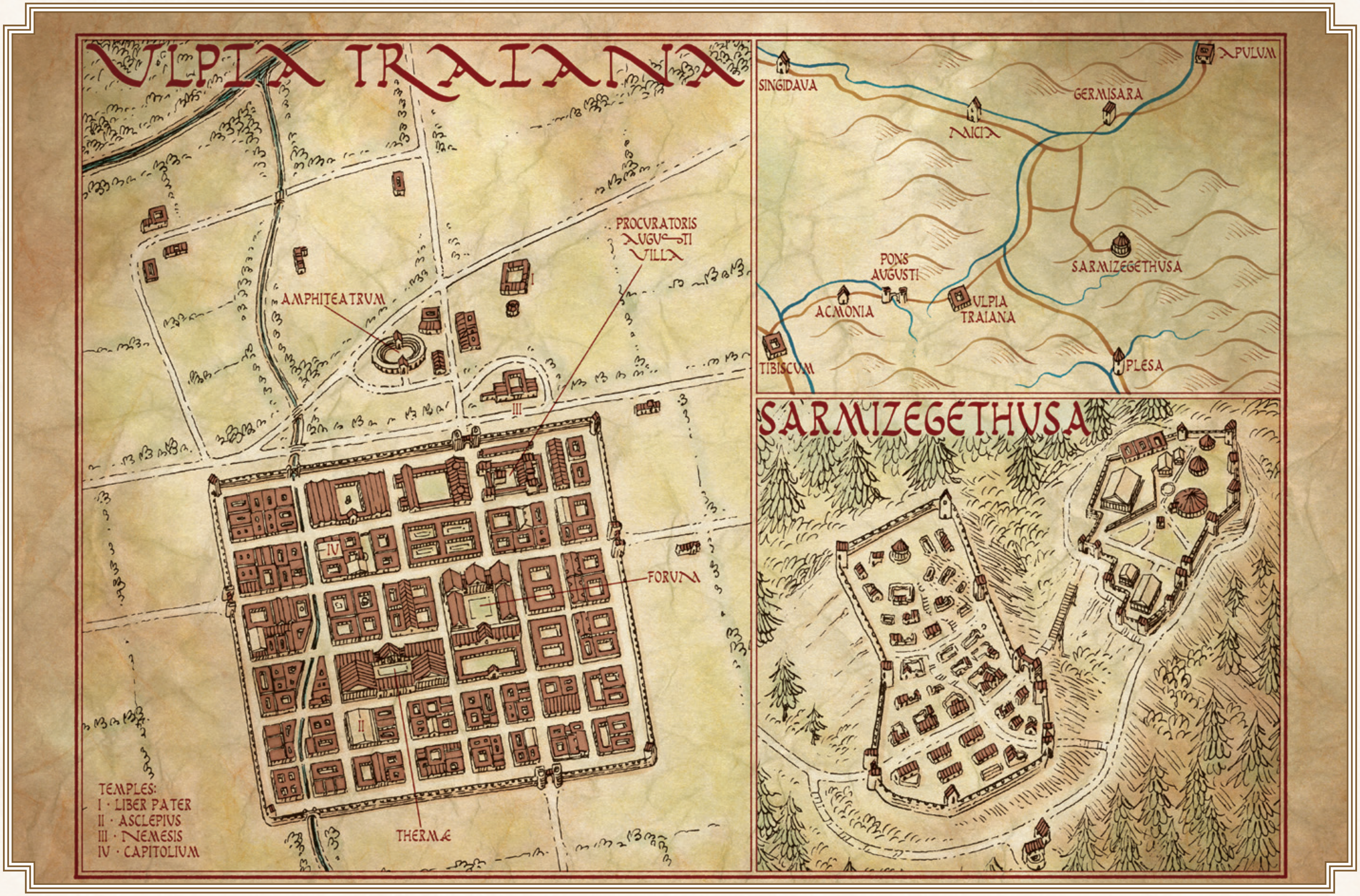
Enrico Ghidini
Enrico Magnani
Enrico Martini
Enrico Menozzi
Enrico Negro
Ensley F. Guffey
Enzo Barlacchi
Epic Party Games
Eric Bertolotti
Eric Conti
Eric Harris
Eric M. Sortun
Eric Olson
Eric Priehs
Eric van den Broek
Erik Growen
Ernesto D'Isanto
Ernesto Haymar
Eros Lorenzin
Ettore Bonisagi
Evan Jones
Ewald Große-Wilde
Fabio Attoli
Fabio Cappelletti
Fabio Fratangeli
Fabio Galbiati
Fabio Maiorana
Fabio Milito Pagliara
Fabrizio Anastasio
Fabrizio Caporali
Fabrizio Falcomer
Fabrizio Fioretti
Fabrizio Nava
Fabrizio Quartieri
Fabrizio Sala
Fabrizio Tufi
Fahad Mustafa
Federica Petroni
Federico Broggi
Federico Burlando
Federico Lisi
Federico Minuto
Federico Scattolin
Federico Villani
Felix Shafir
Fernando DelaGuardia-Rodriguez
Filippo Di Giovanni
Filippo Paciotti
Filpo Bianco
Finitrevs Hand
Flavio Perri
Florian Hofer
Forrester Killh
Francesca Garello
Francesco Angelini:zz
Francesco Bergamini
Francesco Bruschinizh
Francesco ColamonicikJ
Francesco Garreffa
Francesco Ghibaudo
Francesco Giglihjn
Francesco Panitti
Francesco Paparelli
Francesco Rapisarda
Francesco Ricceri
Francesco Sciarra
Francesco Totolo
Francis Helie
Francisco José Cabrer
Franck “Booga” Florentin
Francois Girard
Frank Uebe
Frazer Barnard
Frej Klem Thomsen
Fulvio Zorzer
Gabriel Alexander Maria Fumagalli
Gabriel Trujillo Hernández
Gabriele abbani
Gabriele Albertini
Gabriele Benzo
Gabriele Bonali
Gabriele Carnevale
Gabriele Celsi
Gabriele Frontini
Gabriele Raise
Gary Nield
Gavin Anders
Geoffrey M. Allen
George D. Mattson
George Kaldis
George Velez
Gerald Frisch
Gert-Jan van der Krogt
Giacomo Guarnieri
Giacomo Lombardi
Giacomo Mrakic
Giacomo Sottocasa e Matteo Panizzi
Giampaolo Agosta
Gian Luca Pavesi
Gian Luca Zampogna
Gian Maria “Zio JS” Sandy
Gianluca Carfi
Gianluca Casu
Gianluca Cerretelli
Gianluca Ferri
Gianluca Poccianti
Gianmarco Elvati
Giorgio Giuliani
Giorgio Schiappelli
Giorgio Viganò
Giovanni Agozzino
Giovanni Bonechi
Giovanni Casula
Giovanni Cislaghi
Giovanni D'Addabbo
Giovanni Magno
Giovanni Zotti
Giuliano Gianfriglia
Giuliano Iorio
Giulio Bosi
Giulio Capone
Giulio Cazzoli
Giulio Cesare Giorgini
Giulio Garzoni
Giulio Petazzi
Giulio Tedeschi
Giuseppe Alongi
Giuseppe La Cara
Giuseppe Losapio
Giuseppe Porzio
Giuseppino Iena
Glenn Francis II
Goffredo Verani
Graham Alexander
Grand Admiral Jello
Graziano Zanichelli
Greg Chapin
Greg Whitehead
Gregg Bingham
Gregorio Bucci
Gregory Dean Ford
Gregory Hammond
Grzegorz Bagiński
Guillaume Noël
Guillem Gruartmoner de Vera
Gunter Raffelsbauer
Guy Bayes
Guy Edward Larke
Hanataka Shinya
Helio T. M. Farias
Henning Elfwering
Henning Fahland
Henning Rauth
Henrique Jucá
Holly Koponen
Hung-Yang Shen
I.C.N.H GmbH
Iacopo “Drago Nero” Trotta
Iacopo Venni
Ian Hathaway
Ian MaFarlin
Ian Richards
Ida Scevola
Ignacio Granados Jiménez
Ignacio Vega-Matilla
Ignazio Tarragoni
Iida Takuya
Ingo Beyer
Ioannis Tsanikidis
Isaac Fernandes
Ivan Torres
Ivano Franzini
Ivano Polischi
Jack Gulick
Jacob Ansari
Jacopo Casiraghi
Jacopo Solcia
Jake Topolie
Jakub “Arathi” Nowosad
James Armstrong-Wood
James Bolton
James Dyer
James Hattaway
James Holden
James M. Yager
James Navarre
James Oram
Jamie
Jan Arkebauer
Jan Artoos
Jason Baur
Jason Broadley
Jason Dickerson
Jason Italiano
Jason Lambert
Jason McCrea
Jason Thorne
Jason Verbitsky
Javier Coll
Jay Mark Stocks
Jaymin Thompson
Jean Balczesak
Jean-Francois Fluttaz
Jean-Guillaume Vernay
Jeannette Speicher
Jeff Grubb
Jeff Lee
Jeff Scifert
Jeff Workman
Jens Fehn
Jens Marx
Jens Wagner
Jeremy Burke
Jeremy W Baker
Jerry Prochazka
Jerry Weiler
Joachim Alt
Jochen Graf
Jodhan Ford
Joe Costa
Joe McGee
Joel Kollander
Joey Shoes
Johan Normark
John B. Smid Jr.
John Bielas
John Cmar
John Jordan Schreck
John M. Atkinson
John M. Portley
John N Richard
John Phillips
John Scherer
John Taber
Jon Jay Sharpe
Jonathan Frank
Jonathan Robb
Jonathan W. Hatter
Jonathan Weber
Joran aus den Schatten
Jorge Torres Hernández
Jörn Beyer
José Luiz Ferreira Cardoso
Joseph Evenson
Joseph Lockett
Joseph Sommovigo
Josh Cremosnik
Joshua Gibling
Joshua Staton
Juan Alberto Sánchez Costillo
Juan Bascuñana Bastias
Juan Ignacio Osona Gutierrez
Jukka Särkijärvi
Juri Tolotto
Justin C. Dunmire
Kai-Uwe Ratzeburg
Kari Salonen
Karl Edward Olivieri
Karl Rodriguez
Kevin Jacobs
Kieran Ryle
Kilian M. Bravin
Kolbey M Araujo
Kristoffer “Illern” Holmén
Kurt McMahon
Kyle T. Harris

Kyle Thelin
Kyle William Quinton
Laerte
Lanforti Alberto
Lars Kuhn
Laura Cardinale
Laura Gallo
Laura Renwick
Laurence Plaisted
Laurent Labrot
Lawrence Alman
Leonardo Tavani
Leron Culbreath
Leto Matteo
Liam Murray
Lindsey Deanshaw
Lisa Padol
Liz Fick
Logan Laren Liuzzo
Lorena Pagella
Lorenzo Ferranti
Lorenzo Fossetti
Lorenzo Mazzoli
Lorenzo Mirandola
Lorenzo Painelli
Lorenzo Tartani
Lorenzo Tonfoni
Loretta Chechi
Loris Palmucci
Louis Jenner
Luca Carissimi
Luca D'Alicandro
Luca De Simon
Luca Forti
Luca Freddy Bargossi
Luca Lettieri
Luca Ligi
Luca Magnone
Luca Manfredini
Luca Papisca
Luca Scoz
Luca Zilovich
Lucia Bentivoglio
Lucn De Baron
Mackenzie Schmaltz
Madeleine Eid
Magnus Eriksson
Malangeau Sebastien
Malcolm Beardmore
Man Of Memories
Manfredi Mangano
Manuel "Squalo" Bernardini
Manuel Darin
Manuel Gaiani
Manuel Vox
Marc Hameleers
Marco Benti
Marco Bolzoni
Marco Cattaldo
Marco Cipolla
Marco Conti
Marco Fioretti
Marco Gavazzi
Marco Generoso
Marco Governatori
Marco Isopi
Marco J. Morelli
Marco Levreri
Marco Lorenzetti
Marco Maiolini
Marco Mengoli
Marco Molino
Marco Oreste Migliori
Marco Riva
Marco Tezzele
Marina Michelini
Mario Nadalini
Mario Valerio Terribile
Mark Graunke
Mark Kerns
Mark Leymaster
Mark Solino
Mark Somogyi
Marko Poleczek
Markus Feldmann
Marshall D. Warner
Martin Chodorek
Martin Ellermeier
Martin Greening
Martin Hafner
Martin Hinves
Martin Legg
Martin Six
Martina "Morgana" Moscoloni
Massimiliano De Pasquale
Massimiliano Tavarone
Massimo Biancani
Massimo Campolucci
Massimo Salvador
Mathieu Lorange
Matt Gregory
Matteo Barbero
Matteo Biguzzi
Matteo Casali
Matteo Ignesti
Matteo Imperio
Matteo Lo Bue
Matteo Lucchini
Matteo Morra
Matteo Sansalone
Matteo Scola
Matteo Tirelli
Matteo Tusa
Matteo Vecchio
Matteo Viegi
Matthew Jackson
Matthew Jones
Matthew Koelling
Matthew Maranda
Mattia Natale
Mattia Negroni
Mattia Pizzolato
Mattia Riviera
Maurizio Filardi
Maurizio Garzelli
Maurizio Locusti
Maurizio Magni
Maurizio Modica
Maurizio Turci
Maurizio Varrone
Mauro "KIlamdil" Monti
Mauro Adorna
Mauro Longo
Maxence Delsaut
Maxime Tenon
Mel Follmer
Michael Bowman
Michael Chandrasegaran
Michael Holzhausen
Michael Kanaris
Michael Novy
Michael Thorn
Michael V. Salas
Michelangelo Pecoraro
Michele Facco
Michele Graziani
Michele Nenzi
Michele Porcaro
Michele Stara
Mike Austin
Mike O'Brien
Mike Schulenberg
Mike Spielberger
Mildra The Monk
Miles Nerini
Minor Inconvenience
Mirco Baldo
Mirko "Toremack" Savoia
Mirko Hess
Mirko Luppi
Mirko Pezzali
Mitchell Wallace
Nagy Dávid
Narlotep
Nathan Reetz
Nathan Verdi
Neal Dalton
Neal Edwards
NecroNuke9
Neil Coles
Neil Munro
Niccolò Di Macio
Niccolò Fattori
Niccolò Solaro
Nicholas Delfrate
Nicholas Hanson
Nicholas Lockwood
Niclas-Gerrit Weiss
Nicola Carlo Dragonetti
Nicola di Bartolomeo
Nicola Martelli
Nicola Nannerini
Nicola Santagostino
Nicola Went
Nicolas Corai
Niels Christian Selchau-Mark
Niklas Johansson
No Dice Unrolled
Noemí Herreruela Rodríguez
Olaf Gietz
Olivier Robineau
Olivier Verneret
Olli Oosi
Ols Jonas Petter Olsson
Orazio Conforti
Orecchia Denis Umberto
Óscar Estefanía Hernández
Oscar Iglesias Fernandez
Ottaviano De Cicco
Pablo Tamargo
Paolo Bizzarri
Paolo Canuto
Paolo Mazza
Paolo Mulatti
Paolo Pallini
Paolo Scandolo
Paolo Spato
Paolo Spaziosi
Patrick Middleton
Patrick Pilgrim
Paul Barton
Paul Hayes
Paul Sementilli
Paul Snow
Paul Stubbs
Paul Warner
Pedro(Te)
Pete Tracy
Peter Baldwin
Peter Hart
Peter Scott Brooks
Peter Van Rossem
Petr Svarny
Philippe Magdelénat
Phill Massey
Phillip McGregor
Pier Antonio Bianchi
Pierantonio Bovolon
Pierluigi Albiani
Pierluigi Tortorella
Piermaria Maraziti
Pierpaolo Izzo
Pierpaolo Resmini
Pierre-Marie Plans
Pietro Bergamaschi
Pinkopulcino Giampy
Professor Matthew Broome
Radoslaw Miasik
Raffaele Perrotta
Raffaello "Lello" Trevisiol
Ralph Mazza
Randy Estep
Riccardo Carducci
Riccardo Mariotti
Riccardo Mazzoni
Riccardo Ricaboni
Riccardo Simoni
Riccardo Sirignano
Riccardo Sottili
Richard A. Edwards
Richard Downs
Richard Gable
Richard Greene
Richard Lundstrom
Richard Rivera
Richard Rossi
Richard Tennison
Richard Wagner
Rick LaRue
Rick Osborne
Ricky Veronese
Rob Schubert
Robert Haberzettel
Robert Sieminski
Robert Turner Scott
Roberto Bellesia
Roberto Bresciani
Roberto Elia
Roberto Lazzaroni
Roberto Mandrioli
Roberto Marcarini
Roberto Perina

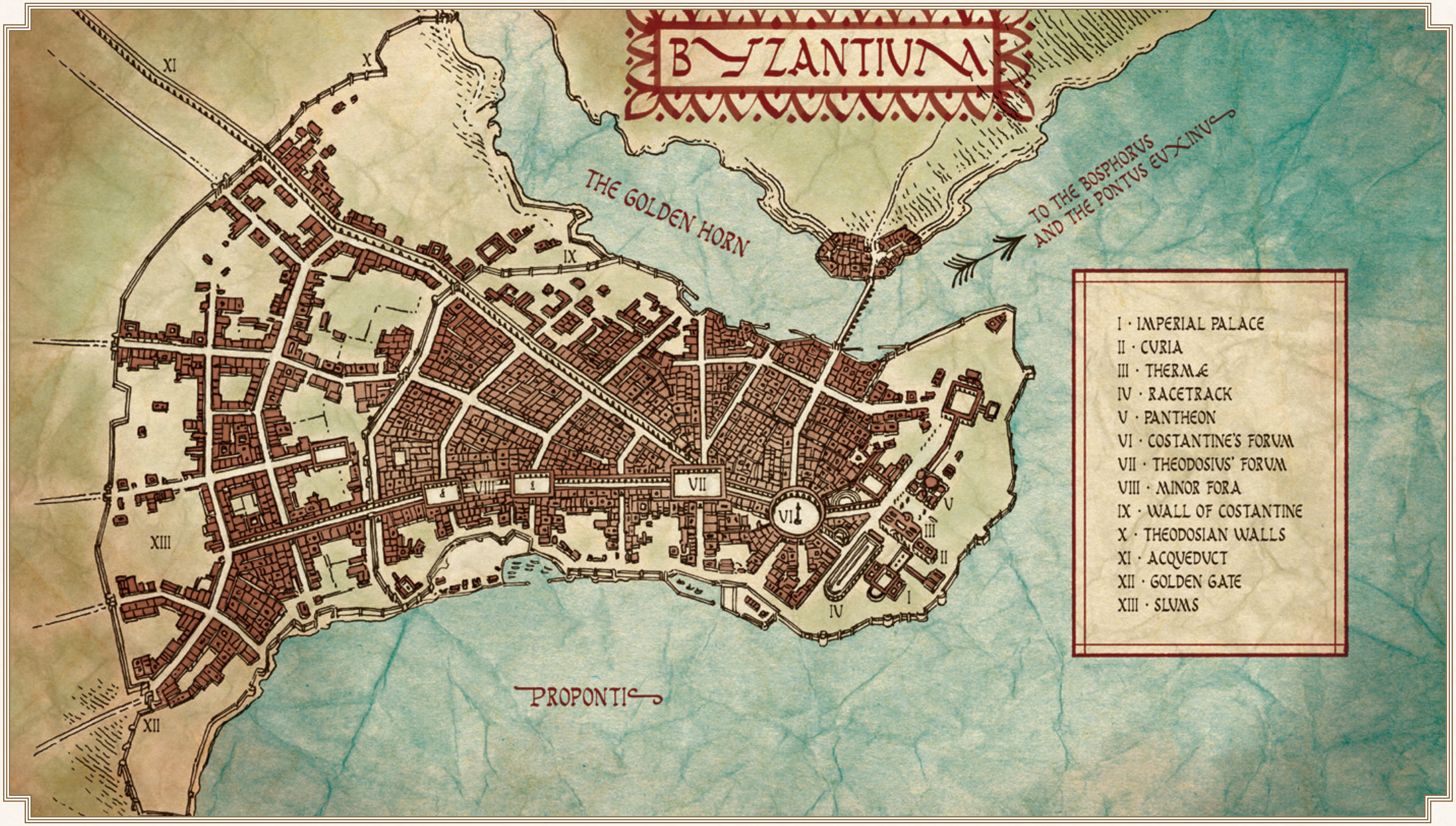
Roberto Rossi
Roberto Visonà
Robin Longhurst
Rocco Pier Luigi
Rod Meek
Rodolfo Gruden
Rodolphe Duhil
Roger Campbell
Romain Rolland
Roman Emin
Ronald Cover
Ross Nendick
Rotondi Stefano
Roy Miller
Ruben Brandt
Ruben Menten-Plesters
Ryan Dukacz
S. Alexander Gentry
Salvatore Bongiorno
Salvatore De Dominicis
Sam Caldis
Sam Heazlewood
Samuel Braconi
Samuel Farro
Samuel Feutry
Samuel Grandy
Samuel Sande
Samuel Zeoli
Sandro Graziani
Scott Brown
Scott Hodgman
Scott Rhymer
Sebastian Kehrle
Sebastien Hauguel
Sergio Roscini
Servus
Shane Driskell
Shane Ellswood
Shawn D. Malara
Silvio Herrera Gea
Simon Aebli
Simon Brake
Simon D. Oldham
Simon Jan Aeschlimann
Simon Moore
Simon Strand
Simon Stroud
Simona Carloppi
Simone Bonfrate
Simone Carlucci
Simone Casati
Simone Colombo
Simone Cresci
Simone Ferrari “ilSimo”
Simone Hayes
Simone Iapelli
Simone Meconi
Simone Santunione
Solfati Alessio
Songbird
Søren Helander Jensen
Soren moskjaer Lauridsen
Stefan Küppers
Stefan Nilsson
Stefano Armenia
Stefano Liggeri
Stefano Miorelli
Stefano Pedone
Stefano Rizzo
Stefano Scaglione
Stefano Tenca
Stefano Tonini
Stefano Torretta
Stephan Schultes
Stephan Szabo
Stephano Filandro
Stephen
Stephen John Townsend
Stephen Jolly
Steve Albany
Steve Zaccardi
Steven Bocchetto
Stuart Rae
Styrbjörn Gren
Sven Wiese
Szilágyi László Gábor
Tamás Gábor
Tebaldi Michael
Ted Leaman
The Creative Fund by BackerKit
Theo Riches
Thierry De Gagné
Thomas Balls-Thies
Thomas Fassnacht
Thomas Gagniarre
Thomas Kurilla
Thomas Powell
Thomas Roeloffs
Tim Rudolph
Tim Winter
Timolution
Tingyang Shen
Tiziano Grancagnolo
Tiziano Leonardi
Tobias Niemitz
Tod Sistrunk
Todd Stephens
Todd Waggoner
Tom Fagerlund
Tom Van de Sande
Tomislav Jaksic
Tommaso De Benetti
Tommi Ojala
Torbjörn Johnson
Tristan Chenier
Tudormorgs
Tuomas Ristimäki
Ty Larson
Tyge Sjöstrand
Tyler Brown
Uland Grawe
Ulf Lilienthal
Ulrich Drees
Valenti Cesare
Valerio Ciprandi
Vecciolini Federico
Vincent Cournoyera
Vincenzo Barresi
Vincenzo Colacino “Il Presidente”
Vincenzo De Concilio
Vincenzo Gallo
Vincenzo-Maria “Viĉ” Cappelleri
Vojtěch Matoušek
Volker Weinzheimer
Walter Cavalcante
Wilfried Bosson
Willem Stoop
Willem Stroop
Willenberg Computersysteme
William Beers
William James Dowie
William P. Jackson
Wolfgang Reich
Wolfram Iglisch
Wrathamon
Xavier Mulotte
Yoshiki Kuchikura
Yuri Sinigaglia
ZahanMar


CASTRA CITERA
CASTRA
AMPHITEATRUM
THERMÆ
FORTIFIED GATEWAY
TOWER
LIMES
TOWER
TEMPLE WITH INN
TEMPLE
PUBLIC BUILDING
VAMA

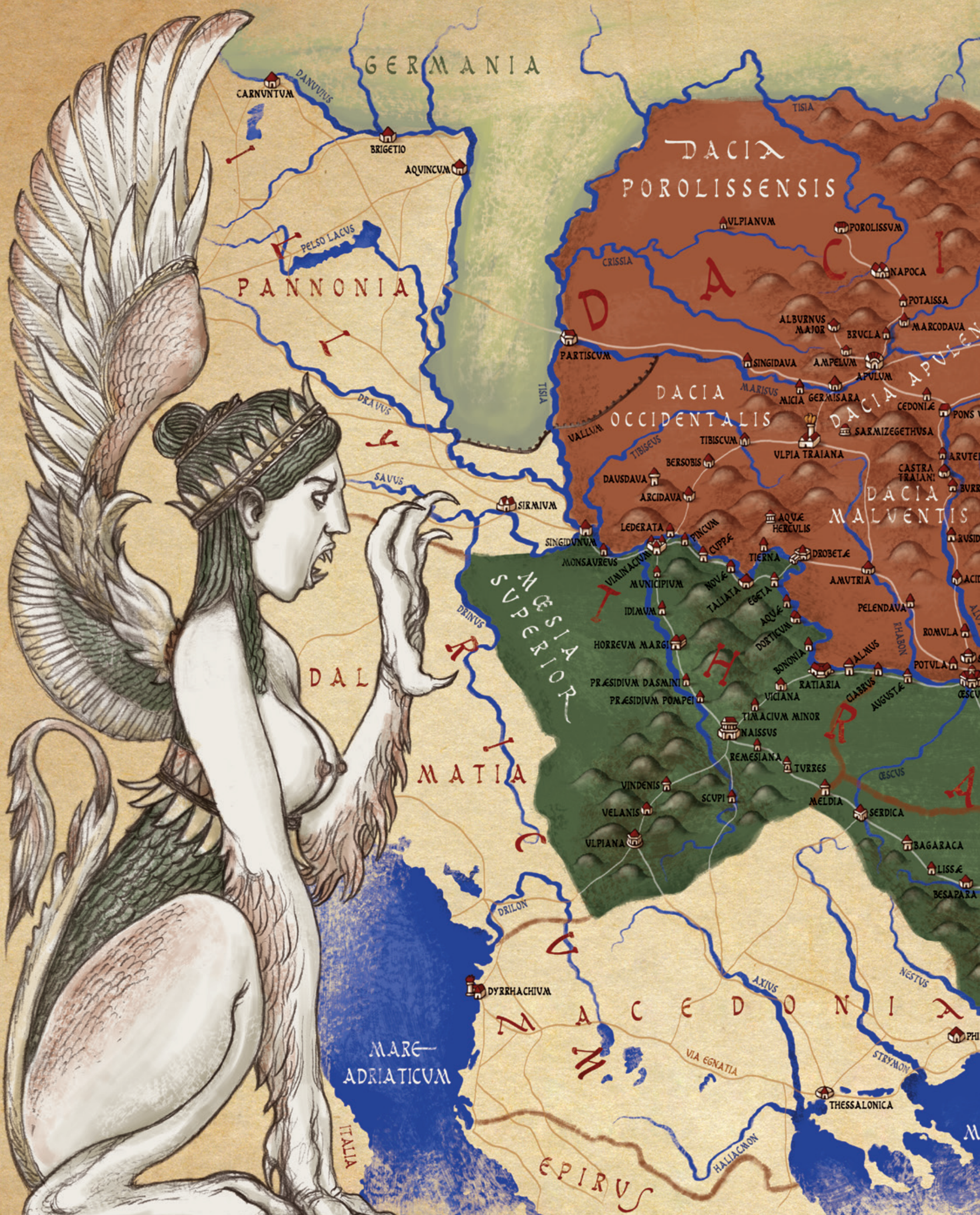
***Porolissum, The Northern Headquarters**, artwork by Francesco Mattioli*

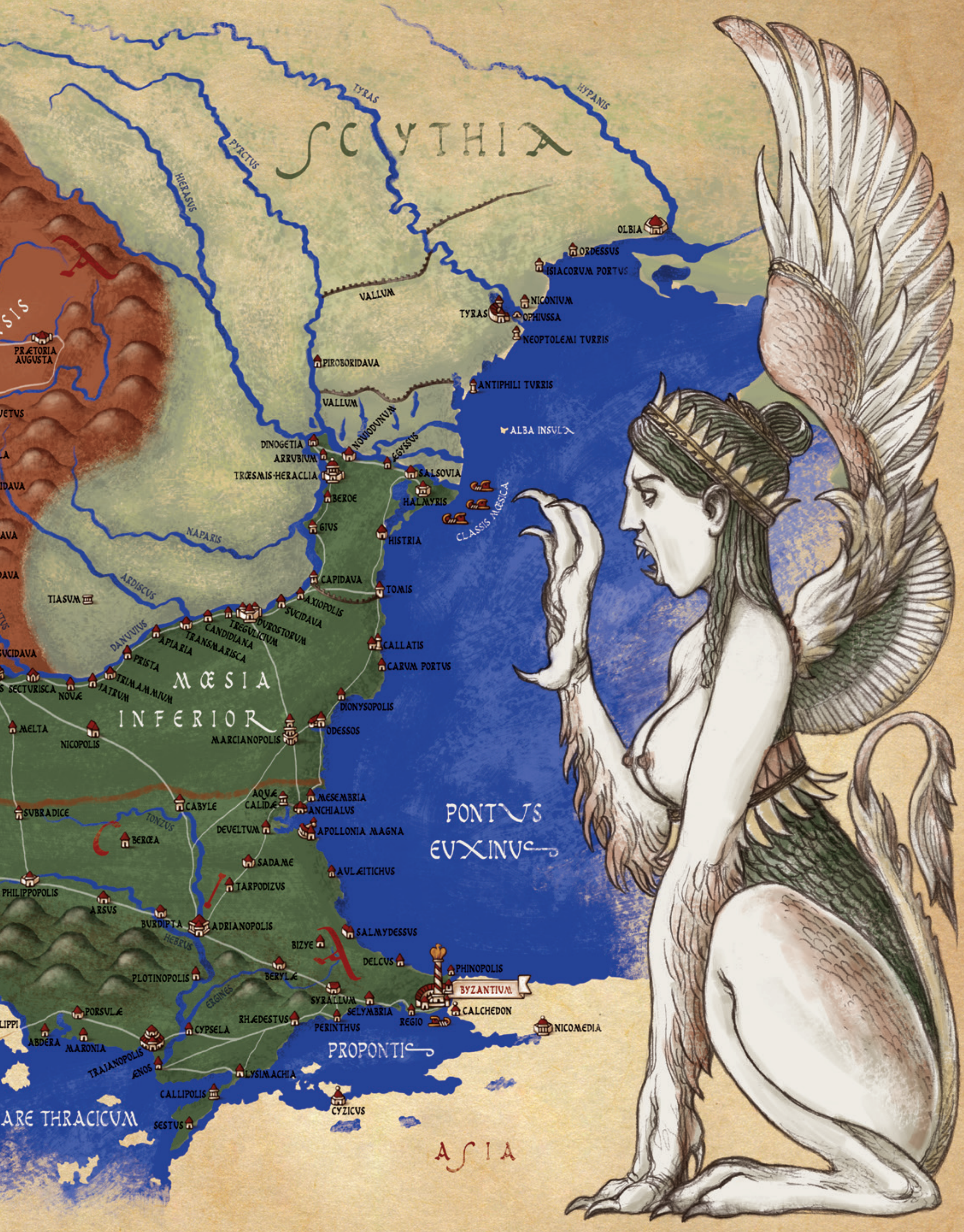

ULPIA TRAIANA
PROCURATORIS AUGUSTI VILLA
AMPHITEATRUM
I
III
IV
FORUM
II
THERMÆ
TEMPLES:
I · LIBER PATER
II · ASCLEPIUS
III · NEMESIS
IV · CAPITOLIUM
SINGIDAVA
APULUM
GERMISARA
MICIA
PONS AUGUSTI
SARMIZEGETHUSA
ACMONIA
ULPIA TRAIANA
TIBISCUM
PLESA
SARMIZEGETHUSA

***Ulpia Traiana and Sarmizegethusa, the two Capitals of Dacia**, artwork by Francesco Mattioli*


BYZANTIVM
THE GOLDEN HORN
TO THE BOSPHORVS
AND THE PONTVS EVXINVS
PROPONTIS
I · IMPERIAL PALACE
II · CVRIA
III · THERMÆ
IV · RACETRACK
V · PANTHEON
VI · COSTANTINE'S FORVM
VII · THEODOSIVS' FORVM
VIII · MINOR FORA
IX · WALL OF COSTANTINE
X · THEODOSIAN WALLS
XI · ACQVEDVCT
XII · GOLDEN GATE
XIII · SLVMS
I
II
III
IV
V
VI
VII
VIII
IX
X
XI
XII
XIII

***Byzantium**, artwork by Francesco Mattioli*


GERMANIA
CARNUNTUM
DANUVIUS
BRIGETIO
AQUINCUM
PELSO LACUS
PANNONIA
DRAVUS
SAVUS
SIRMIUM
TISIA
VALLUM
DACIA POROLISSENSIS
DACIA
ULPIANUM
POROLISSUM
CRISSIA
NAPOCA
POTAISSA
ALBURNUS MAJOR
BRUCLA
MARCODAVA
PARTISCUM
SINGIDAVA
AMPELUM
APULUM
DACIA OCCIDENTALIS
MARISUS
MICIA
GERMISARA
DACIA APULENSIS
CEDONIÆ
SARMIZEGETHUSA
TIBISCUM
ULPIA TRAIANA
TIBISEUS
BERSOBIS
DAUSDAVA
ARCIDAVA
CASTRA TRAIANI
DACIA MALVENTIS
LEDERATA
PINCUM
CUPPÆ
AQUÆ HERCULIS
SINGIDUNUM
MONSAUREUS
VIMINACIUM
TIERNA
DROBETÆ
MUNICIPIUM
NOVÆ
TALIATA
EGETA
AMUTRIA
MŒSIA SUPERIOR
IDIMUM
AQUÆ
DORTICUM
PELENDAVA
RHABON
ROMULA
HORREUM MARGI
BONONIA
ALMUS
POTULA
RATIARIA
CIABRUS
AUGUSTÆ
PRÆSIDIUM DASMINI
PRÆSIDIUM POMPEI
VICIANA
TIMACIUM MINOR
NAISSUS
REMESIANA
TURRES
ŒSCUS
DRINUS
ILLYRICUM
THRACIA
DALMATIA
VINDENIS
SCUPI
MELDIA
SERDICA
VELANIS
ULPIANA
BAGARACA
LISSÆ
BESAPARA
DRILON
DYRRHACHIUM
MARE ADRIATICUM
MACEDONIA
AXIUS
NESTUS
VIA EGNATIA
STRYMON
THESSALONICA
HALIACMON
ITALIA
EPIRUS


SCYTHIA
TYRAS
HYPANIS
PYRETUS
HIERASUS
VALLUM
VALLUM
OLBIA
ORDESSUS
ISIACORUM PORTUS
NICONIUM
TYRAS
OPHIUSSA
NEOPTOLEMI TURRIS
PIROBORIDAVA
ANTIPHILI TURRIS
PRÆTORIA AUGUSTA
NOVIODUNUM
ALBA INSULA
DINOGETIA
ARRUBIUM
ÆGYSSUS
SALSOVIA
TRŒSMIS-HERACLIA
BEROE
HALMYRIS
CLASSIS MŒSICA
GIUS
NAPARIS
HISTRIA
ARDISCUS
CAPIDAVA
TOMIS
TIASUM
AXIOPOLIS
SUCIDAVA
DUROSTORUM
TEGULICIUM
CANDIDIANA
TRANSMARISCA
APIARIA
DANUVIUS
PRISTA
SUCIDAVA
CALLATIS
CARUM PORTUS
SECTURISCA
NOVÆ
TRIMAMMIUM
IATRUM
MŒSIA
INFERIOR
DIONYSOPOLIS
ODESSOS
MARCIANOPOLIS
MELTA
NICOPOLIS
AQUÆ CALIDÆ
MESEMBRIA
ANCHIALUS
SUBRADICE
CABYLE
TONZUS
DEVELTUM
APOLLONIA MAGNA
PONTUS EUXINUS
BERŒA
SADAME
AULÆITICHUS
TARPODIZUS
PHILIPPOPOLIS
ARSUS
BURDIPTA
ADRIANOPOLIS
HEBRUS
SALMYDESSUS
BIZYE
DELCUS
PHINOPOLIS
PLOTINOPOLIS
BERYLÆ
BYZANTIUM
SYRALLUM
SELYMBRIA
CALCHEDON
PORSULÆ
ERGINES
RHÆDESTUS
PERINTHUS
REGIO
NICOMEDIA
CYPSELA
ABDERA
MARONIA
TRAJANOPOLIS
ÆNOS
PROPONTIS
LYSIMACHIA
CALLIPOLIS
CYZICUS
ARE THRACICUM
SESTUS
ASIA

DACIA AND THRACIA
STORM AT THE EMPIRE'S BORDERS

LEX ARCANA IS THE ALTERNATE HISTORY ROLE-PLAYING GAME SET IN A ROMAN EMPIRE WHICH DID NOT FALL

This official setting module for ***Lex Arcana*** describes the wild and dangerous **Provinces of Dacia and Thracia**, and offers a report about **cold and lethal Scythia**, the **land which lays beyond the Danube limes**.
These harsh and merciless borderlands, dominated by eerie roars and the pervasive clanging of steel, are haunted by primal terrors, bloodthirsty monsters and marauders who have crossed the border to plunder the Empire's outposts. At the same time, huge treasures, ancestral secrets and mysteries hidden for generations await the fearless Custodes of the Cohors Auxiliaria Arcana, for the greater glory of Rome.

Dacia and Thracia contains:

- Details on countries, main cities and prominent individuals from the two provinces on the Danube.
- Countless hints and hooks for adventures and scenarios, focused on the greatest dangers of these territories and the lands of Scythia, their most fabled treasures and most gruesome mysteries.
- Tens of tables and sidebars with artefacts, encounters and other dangers to enrich game sessions.
- New Rules, Specializations, Weapons, Equipment and Magic Disciplines.
- New Enemies, Monsters, Indigitamenta, Rituals and Magic Abilities.
- Three breath-taking adventures that will lead the Custodes from the gloomy forests of Dacia to the grassy plains of Thracia, and on to the gilded and blood-stained tombs of Scythia.

Are you ready to face the storm at the Empire Borders?

QUALITY GAMES